

## MDG 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

### Snapshots

- All but 3 of 42 reporting economies in the Asia and Pacific region have already achieved or expected to achieve gender equality at the primary education level by 2015. At the secondary level, only 5 economies might fall short of the target.
- The performance on gender equality in tertiary education has improved, but 13 economies are lagging, including two of the most populous ones—Bangladesh and India.
- Women held less than 40% of the wage-earning jobs outside of agriculture in 16 of 34 reporting economies, and less than 20% in three of the most populous ones despite some improvement over time. Women's representation in national parliaments increased in 29 of 40 reporting regional members between 2000 and the latest year.

### Introduction

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

The gender parity index (GPI) is used to track this target. This index refers to the ratio of the number of female students enrolled in a specific education 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 of 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. The accepted measure for gender parity in education is 0.97–1.03. However, when tracking progress, a cutoff ratio of 0.95 is considered sufficient for having achieved parity.

MDG 3 also 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 2011, although the latest available data may be from 2002 to 2012. For the share of women in nonagricultural wage employment, the reference year is 2010, with the latest available data ranging from 2003 to 2011. For the proportion of seats women held in national parliaments, data for the latest year are for 2013, except for some Pacific economies.

### Key trends

**Nearly all economies in the region have achieved the target for eliminating gender disparity in primary school.** By 2011 or the latest year with data, 39 of 45 reporting economies had achieved female–male ratios in primary education of 0.95 or higher and, of

these, 21 reported ratios of 1.00 or higher (Table 3.1). Six economies fell short of the 0.95 target—Afghanistan at 0.71, Pakistan at 0.82, Nepal at 0.86, Papua New Guinea at 0.89, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) at 0.94, and Viet Nam at 0.94.

Box 3.1 shows that three of the six economies yet to reach 0.95 are on track to achieve it by 2015 at their current rates of progress. However, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Papua New Guinea will need to accelerate efforts if they are to meet the target within 2 years.

**Substantial progress has been made toward gender equality in secondary schools.** By 2011 or the latest year, 35 of 44 reporting economies had achieved GPIs in secondary education of 0.95 or higher. Twenty nine had GPIs of 1.00 or above. However, values for nine economies were under 0.95, and the gap between their GPIs and the target level was generally greater than gaps of the economies falling short of the primary school target. Box 3.2 shows how the nine economies are expected to fare between now and 2015. Four, including India, are expected to join the group that has achieved 0.95. At current rates of progress, though, Afghanistan, the Lao PDR, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, and Tajikistan will not meet the target. Afghanistan could fall far short—its GPI in 2011 was just 0.55.

**Gender disparities are greater at the tertiary level of education.** More females than males were enrolled in tertiary education in about half the economies, which had GPIs above 1.03. In Palau, more than twice as many females as males were at tertiary institutions (Table 3.1). Seventeen economies had GPIs below 0.95, with males outnumbering females in tertiary education, often by a wide margin. While most of the economies with GPIs below 0.95 narrowed the gender disparities between the earliest and latest years, the GPIs remained far below target in Afghanistan (0.24), Tajikistan (0.52), Papua New Guinea (0.57), Nepal and Vanuatu (0.60), and Cambodia (0.62).

Box 3.3 presents economies that have not yet reached the gender equality goal for tertiary education and have adequate data for an assessment. Only two—Indonesia and Pakistan—are on track to achieve GPIs of at least 0.95 by 2015 at current rates of progress. Bangladesh, India, the Republic of Korea, and six others made inadequate progress toward the target and four others made no progress.

Looking across primary, secondary, and tertiary education, Figure 3.1 shows that eight economies have achieved high GPIs in all three levels—Armenia; Brunei Darussalam; the People’s Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Malaysia; Myanmar; New Zealand; and Taipei, China. The record of some others, notably Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea, was relatively weak across all levels.

Box 3.1 Progress toward the target for gender equality in primary education

On track	
Lao PDR Nepal	Viet Nam
Slow progress	
Afghanistan Pakistan	Papua New Guinea

Lao PDR = Lao People’s Democratic Republic.  
Source: Table 3.1.

Box 3.2 Progress toward the target for gender equality in secondary education

On track	
Cambodia India	Nepal Solomon Islands
Slow progress	
Afghanistan Lao PDR Pakistan	Papua New Guinea Tajikistan

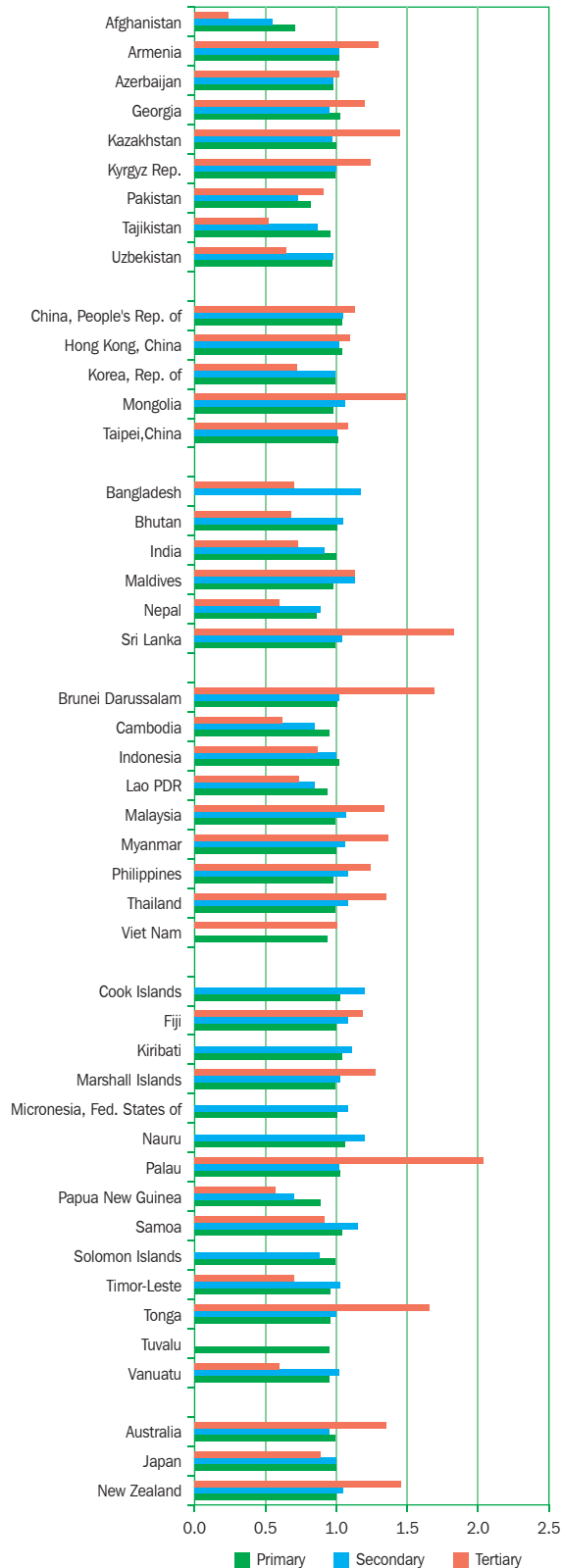
Lao PDR = Lao People’s Democratic Republic.  
Source: Table 3.1.

Box 3.3 Progress toward the target for gender equality in tertiary education

On track	
Indonesia	Pakistan
Slow progress	
Bangladesh Bhutan Cambodia India Korea, Rep. of	Lao PDR Nepal Papua New Guinea Tajikistan
No progress/regressing	
Afghanistan Samoa	Timor-Leste Uzbekistan

Lao PDR = Lao People’s Democratic Republic.  
Source: Table 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Gender parity index in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, 2011 or latest year



Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic.  
Source: Table 3.1.

**Women are underrepresented in nonfarm paid employment.** The percentage of wage-earning employment outside of agriculture held by women is an indicator of gender equality in access to better employment and integration into the formal economy. Moreover, expanding opportunities for women in the workforce supports economic and social development. For the 34 developing member economies in Figure 3.2, women held just over half the nonfarm wage-earning jobs in 2010 in two—Cook Islands and Mongolia—and almost half in four—Georgia; Hong Kong, China; Kazakhstan; and Kiribati. Women's share of nonfarm wage employment ranged from 40% to 46% in a further 12 economies.

However, in the remaining 16, women held less than 40% of wage-earning jobs outside of agriculture, and in three of Asia's most populous economies—Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan—women held fewer than 20 of every 100 paid nonfarm jobs. While women's share has edged higher since 2000 in 20 economies, notably India, it fell in 12, including Bangladesh and Pakistan.

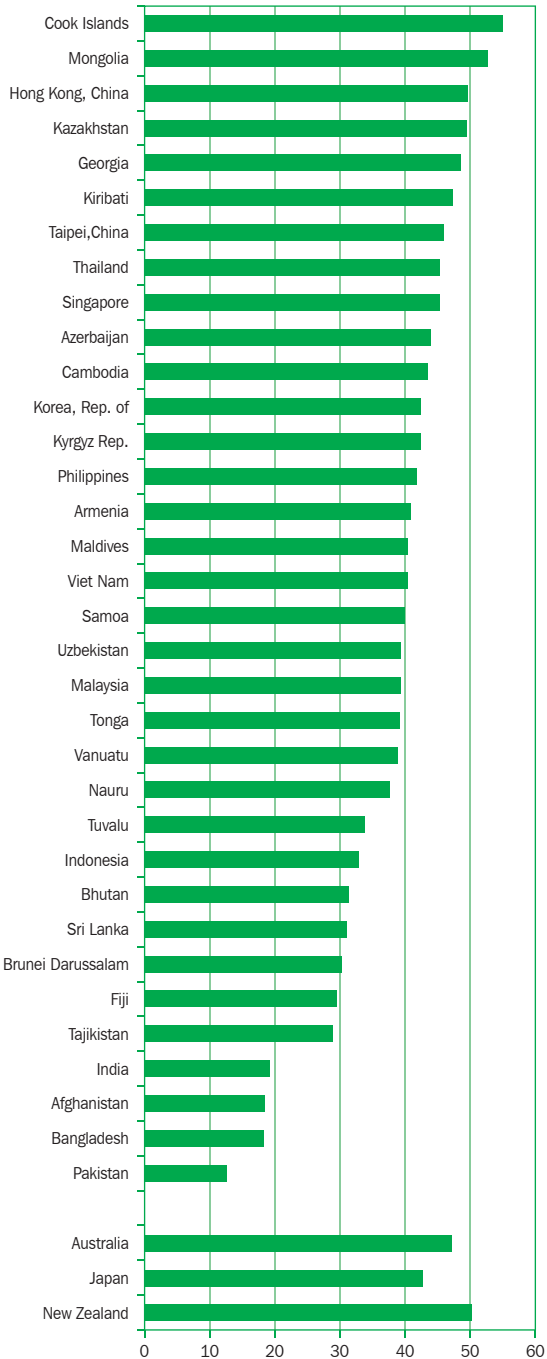
In addition to being underrepresented in wage-earning employment, women face persistent gender wage gaps and low representation in managerial jobs in developed and developing economies (UN 2013).

**Women's representation in national parliaments increased.** Figure 3.3 compares the percentages of women members of national parliaments in 40 regional members of the Asian Development Bank between 2000 and the latest year. Women's representation increased in 70% and fell in 13% of the group during this period. In some cases, the changes were fairly minor, which could be accounted for by swings in electoral fortunes rather than by longer-term trends. But almost half the economies recorded significant increases. The proportion of women at least doubled in Armenia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, the Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Singapore, Tajikistan, Thailand, and Uzbekistan.

Despite these gains, the proportion of women in national parliaments did not approach that of men in developing or developed economies. The highest percentages of women in parliament were in Timor-Leste (39%); Nepal (33%); New Zealand (32%);

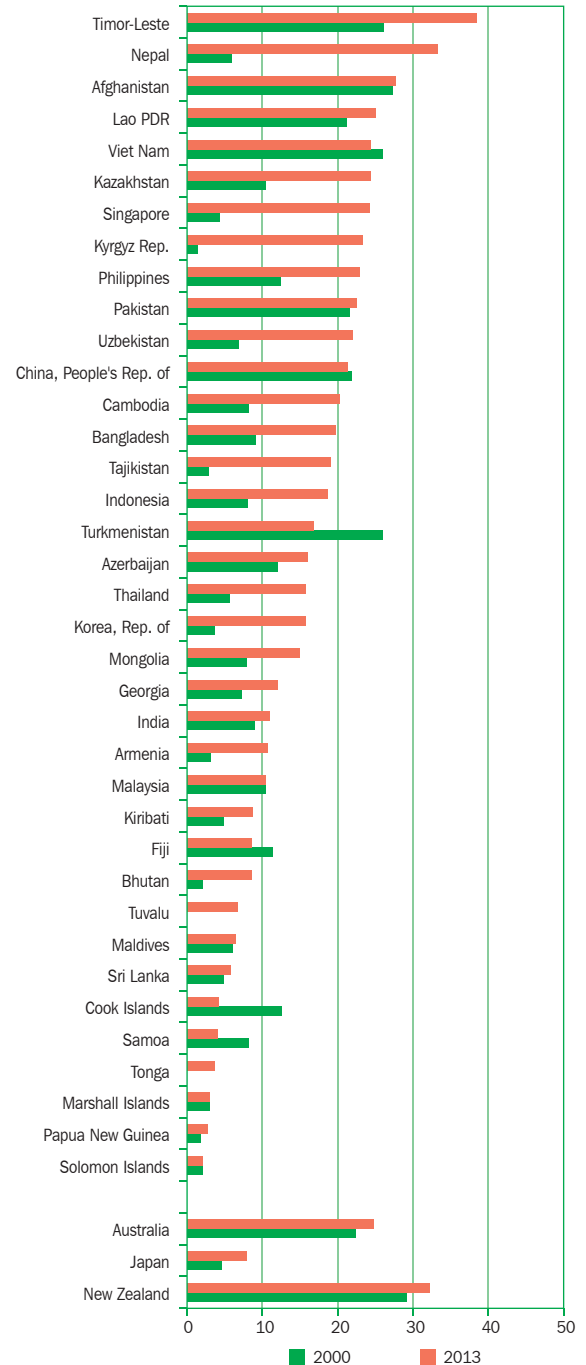
Afghanistan (28%); Australia (25%); the Lao PDR (25%); and Kazakhstan, Singapore, and Viet Nam (24%). Women were least represented in Sri Lanka (6%), Myanmar (6%), the Maldives (7%), Japan (8%), and in Pacific economies (0%–9%) other than Timor-Leste.

Figure 3.2 Percentage of women in nonagricultural wage employment, 2010 or latest year



Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic.  
Source: Table 3.1.

Figure 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, 2000 and 2013 or nearest year (%)



Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic.  
Source: Table 3.1.

## Data issues and comparability

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

The most reliable information on female employment in nonagricultural activities comes from household labor force surveys, but these are not

conducted in all economies. 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.

## MDG 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	2011	1991	2011	1991	2011
<b>Developing Member Economies</b>						
<b>Central and West Asia</b>						
Afghanistan	0.55	0.71	0.51	0.55	0.28 (2003)	0.24 (2009)
Armenia	1.04 (1994)	1.02 (2010)	1.06 (2002)	1.02 (2010)	1.09 (1999)	1.30
Azerbaijan	0.99	0.98	1.01	0.98	0.67	1.02
Georgia	1.00	1.03	0.97	0.95 (2008)	0.91	1.20
Kazakhstan	1.00 (1994)	1.00 (2012)	1.02 (1993)	0.97 (2012)	1.14 (1999)	1.45 (2012)
Kyrgyz Republic	1.01 (1992)	0.99	1.02	1.00	1.04 (1999)	1.24
Pakistan	0.67 (2000)	0.82	0.47	0.73	0.79 (2002)	0.91
Tajikistan	0.98	0.96	0.86 (1999)	0.87	0.43 (1999)	0.52
Turkmenistan	...	...	...	...	...	...
Uzbekistan	0.98	0.97	0.98 (1999)	0.98	0.82 (1999)	0.65
<b>East Asia</b>						
China, People's Rep. of	0.91	1.04	0.75	1.05	0.83 (2003)	1.13
Hong Kong, China	1.00 (1995)	1.04	1.03 (1996)	1.02	1.00 (2003)	1.10
Korea, Rep. of	1.01	0.99 (2010)	0.97	0.99 (2010)	0.49	0.72 (2010)
Mongolia	0.99	0.98	1.10	1.06	1.84 (1999)	1.49
Taipei, China	1.01	1.01 (2012)	1.04	1.01 (2012)	0.96	1.08 (2012)
<b>South Asia</b>						
Bangladesh	...	...	0.94 (1994)	1.17	0.49 (1999)	0.70
Bhutan	0.76 (1993)	1.01 (2012)	0.78 (1998)	1.05 (2012)	0.58 (1999)	0.68
India	0.76	1.00 (2010)	0.63 (1993)	0.92 (2010)	0.54	0.73 (2010)
Maldives	1.00 (1992)	0.98	1.04 (1994)	1.13 (2004)	2.29 (2003)	1.13 (2008)
Nepal	0.63	0.86 (2002)	0.46	0.89 (2006)	0.33	0.60 (2006)
Sri Lanka	0.96	0.99	1.09	1.04	0.48	1.83
<b>Southeast Asia</b>						
Brunei Darussalam	0.96	1.01	1.08	1.02	1.39 (1999)	1.69
Cambodia	0.83 (1994)	0.95	0.54 (1998)	0.85 (2008)	0.21 (1993)	0.62
Indonesia	0.97	1.02	0.82	1.00	0.88 (2000)	0.87
Lao PDR	0.79	0.94	0.66 (1992)	0.85	0.43 (1993)	0.74
Malaysia	1.00	1.00 (2005)	1.05	1.07 (2010)	1.07 (1998)	1.34 (2010)
Myanmar	0.96	1.00 (2010)	0.98	1.06 (2010)	1.25 (1992)	1.37
Philippines	1.00	0.98 (2009)	1.10 (1998)	1.08 (2009)	1.49 (1992)	1.24 (2009)
Singapore	...	...	...	...	...	...
Thailand	0.98	0.99 (2009)	0.97	1.08 (2012)	1.14 (1993)	1.35 (2012)
Viet Nam	0.95 (1998)	0.94	0.89 (1998)	...	0.65 (1998)	1.01
<b>The Pacific</b>						
Cook Islands	1.00 (1998)	1.03	1.10 (1998)	1.20	...	...
Fiji	1.00	1.00	0.97	1.08	1.20 (2003)	1.19 (2005)
Kiribati	1.01	1.04 (2009)	1.07	1.11 (2008)	...	...
Marshall Islands	0.99 (1999)	0.99	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	0.70 (1998)	0.47 (1995)	0.57 (1999)
Samoa	0.99 (1995)	1.04	1.09 (1995)	1.15	0.93 (1998)	0.92 (2001)
Solomon Islands	0.87	0.99 (2010)	0.60	0.88 (2010)	...	...
Timor-Leste	0.93 (2004)	0.96	0.98 (2004)	1.03	1.24 (2002)	0.70 (2009)
Tonga	1.00	0.96 (2007)	1.02	1.00 (2006)	1.35 (1999)	1.66 (2003)
Tuvalu	1.02 (1999)	0.95 (2006)	1.10 (2001)	...	...	...
Vanuatu	0.96	0.95 (2010)	0.81	1.02 (2010)	0.57 (2002)	0.60 (2004)
<b>Developed Member Economies</b>						
Australia	1.00	0.99 (2010)	1.00 (1993)	0.95 (2010)	1.19	1.35 (2010)
Japan	1.00	1.00 (2010)	1.02	1.00 (2010)	0.65	0.89 (2010)
New Zealand	0.99	1.00 (2010)	1.01	1.05 (2010)	1.13	1.46 (2010)

continued

## MDG 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	2013
<b>Developing Member Economies</b>						
<b>Central and West Asia</b>						
Afghanistan	...	19.2 (2002)	18.4 (2008)	3.7	27.3 (2006)	27.7
Armenia	...	45.0 (2002)	40.9	35.6	3.1	10.7
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	12.0
Kazakhstan	...	48.5 (2001)	49.5	13.4 (1997)	10.4	24.3
Kyrgyz Republic	...	44.5 (2002)	42.5	1.4 (1997)	1.4	23.3
Pakistan	7.7	13.0	12.6 (2008)	10.1	21.6 (2003)	22.5
Tajikistan	21.2 (1991)	23.2	28.9 (2009)	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)	...	21.3	21.8	21.3
Hong Kong, China	41.2	44.8	49.6 (2011)	...	...	...
Korea, Rep. of	38.1	40.1	42.5 (2011)	2.0	3.7	15.7
Mongolia	48.5 (2003)	48.6	52.7	24.9	7.9	14.9
Taipei, China	42.9	44.0	46.0	...	...	...
<b>South Asia</b>						
Bangladesh	20.2 (1991)	24.7	18.3	10.3	9.1	19.7
Bhutan	...	...	31.4 (2009)	2.0	2.0	8.5
India	12.7	16.6	19.3	5.0	9.0	11.0
Maldives	15.8	40.6	40.5	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	4.9	4.9	5.8
<b>Southeast Asia</b>						
Brunei Darussalam	22.5 (1991)	30.3	30.3 (2003)	...	...	...
Cambodia	...	41.1	43.5 (2004)	5.8 (1997)	8.2	20.3
Indonesia	29.2	31.7	32.9	12.4	8.0 (2001)	18.6
Lao PDR	20.3	32.1 (2005)	...	6.3	21.2	25.0
Malaysia	35.3 (1991)	37.9	39.3	5.1	10.4 (2001)	10.4
Myanmar	30.7	35.7 (1998)	...	...	...	6.0
Philippines	40.4 (1991)	40.9	41.8 (2011)	9.1	12.4	22.9
Singapore	42.5 (1991)	43.6 (2001)	45.4 (2009)	4.9	4.3	24.2
Thailand	41.9	44.1	45.4 (2011)	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	46.0 (2001)	55.0 (2006)	6.0 (1991)	12.5 (2007)	4.2 (2011)
Fiji	29.9	33.2	29.6 (2005)	4.3 (1997)	11.3	8.5 (2006)
Kiribati	...	36.8	47.4	-	4.9	8.7
Marshall Islands	...	29.3 (1999)	...	3.0	3.0 (2001)	3.0 (2011)
Micronesia, Fed. States of	14.8 (1994)	14.4	...	- (1997)	-	-
Nauru	...	42.0 (2002)	37.6 (2011)	5.6	-	-
Palau	39.5	39.6	...	- (1997)	-	-
Papua New Guinea	27.9	32.1	...	-	1.8	2.7
Samoa	31.0	36.7 (2001)	40.0 (2011)	-	8.2	4.1
Solomon Islands	...	30.8 (1999)	...	-	2.0	2.0
Timor-Leste	...	35.0 (2001)	...	...	26.1 (2003)	38.5
Tonga	...	35.7 (1996)	39.2 (2006)	-	- (2001)	3.6
Tuvalu	...	34.3 (2002)	33.9 (2004)	7.7	-	6.7
Vanuatu	...	37.5 (2004)	38.9 (2008)	4.3	-	-
<b>Developed Member Economies</b>						
Australia	43.7	46.3	47.2 (2011)	6.1	22.4	24.7
Japan	38.0	40.0	42.7 (2011)	1.4	4.6	7.9
New Zealand	47.8	49.8	50.2 (2011)	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 level of education.  
 b There is no tertiary education in the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu. In the Maldives, tertiary education became available only recently.

Sources: Millennium Indicators Database Online (UNSD 2013); for Taipei, China: Educational Statistical Indicators Online (Ministry of Education 2013); National Minimum Development Indicator Database (Secretariat of the Pacific Community 2013).