

India's Gender Gap

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India's Gender Gap: More Than Just a Ranking

Context

The **World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2024** shows a worrying trend: **India ranks 131 out of 148 countries**, slipping two positions from 2023. This decline raises serious concerns about the **effectiveness of India's gender equality policies**.

About the Global Gender Gap Index

Introduced in **2006**, the index measures gender parity in:

- **Economic Participation**
- **Education**
- **Health**
- **Political Empowerment**

Each country receives a score between **0 (inequality)** and **1 (parity)**.

India's Key Stats (2024)

- **Global Rank:** 131/148
- **Parity Score:** 64.1%
- **Global Average Score:** 68.5%

- **Neighbours Ahead: Bangladesh (24), Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan**
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Performance by Dimension

1. Economic Participation

- Small rise in score (**+0.9%**)
- **Female labour force participation: 45.9%**
- **Wage gap:** Women earn **20-30% less** than men
- Large share of **unpaid, unrecognised work**

2. Education

- Good enrolment at primary/secondary level
- **Female literacy: ~70%** (vs **87%** global)
- **Low participation in STEM** due to social barriers

3. Health

- **Sex ratio at birth: ~929 girls/1000 boys**
- **Maternal health issues** and undernutrition persist
- Patriarchal norms impact health access

4. Political Empowerment

- **Women MPs:** down from **14.7% to 13.8%**
- **Women Ministers:** down from **6.5% to 5.6%**

- **Delay in Women's Reservation Bill implementation**
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Key Challenges

- **Patriarchal norms**
 - **Lack of safety, infrastructure**
 - **Digital gender divide**
 - **Slow policy implementation**
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Why Gender Equality Matters

- **\$700 billion** GDP boost (McKinsey estimate)
 - Better **social and development outcomes**
 - Vital for harnessing **demographic dividend**
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Way Forward

- **Implement Women's Reservation Bill** by 2029
- Recognise and **value unpaid labour**
- **Improve safety, skilling,** and workplace policies
- **Bridge digital divide** and expand access
- Collect **gender-disaggregated data** regularly

Conclusion

India's poor ranking reflects structural gender gaps. Achieving gender parity is not only a moral issue but a **strategic necessity** for inclusive economic growth. **Political will and social reform** are the need of the hour.



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