

Countries failing on gender equality, SDG Index finds

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Results for 129 countries measured by a new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Gender Index released by Equal Measures 2030 show that the world is far from achieving gender equality, with 1.4 billion girls and women living in countries that get a “very poor” failing grade on gender equality.

The SDG Gender Index, launched at the Women Deliver 2019 Conference recently, is the most comprehensive tool available to measure the state of gender equality aligned to the SDGs. The index, covering 14 of the 17 SDGs, measures countries on 51 issues ranging from health, gender-based violence, climate change, decent work and others.

The global average score of the 129 countries – which represents 95% of the world’s girls and women – is 65.7 out of 100 (“poor” in the index scoring system). No one country is the world’s best performer – or even among the world’s top ten performers – across all goals or all issues.

In 2015, world leaders from all countries committed to achieve gender equality by 2030 for every girl and every woman when they



signed on to the ambitious goals and targets of the SDGs.

Overall, the world is furthest behind on gender equality issues related to public finance and better gender data (SDG 17), climate change (SDG 13), gender equality in industry and innovation (SDG 9) and – worryingly – the standalone ‘gender equality’ goal (SDG 5).

Denmark tops the index, followed closely by Finland, Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands. The countries

with the lowest scores in the index – Niger, Yemen, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Chad – have all faced conflict and fragility in recent years.

“This report should serve as a wakeup call to the world. We won’t meet the SDGs with 40% of girls and women living in countries that are failing on gender equality,” said Melinda Gates, Co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “But the SDG Gender Index also

shows that progress is possible. Many countries with the most limited resources are making huge strides in removing the barriers for girls and women across economies, politics and society – demonstrating that when it comes to gender equality, governments shouldn’t have excuses for inaction.”

Released alongside the index, a new report from Plan International revealed that a vast majority of girls worldwide want to take leadership positions in

the workplace, politics and wider society, yet more than 9 out of 10 believe as women leaders they will suffer widespread discrimination and sexual harassment.

Close to 10,000 girls and young women between 15 and 24 years were surveyed in 19 countries as part of the research released at the Women Deliver 2019 Conference.

Of all girls and young women surveyed, 76% said they aspired to be a leader and over 60% said they felt confident of their abilities to lead. At the same time, 94% believed that being a leader involved being treated unfairly as compared to men and 93% felt female leaders experienced unwanted physical contact. Alarming, this perception was stronger amongst young women who had some experience of leadership than those who had none.

The report: *Taking the Lead*, is the first of its kind that shines a light on girls’ and young women’s leadership aspirations, perceptions and real experiences across diverse societies and economies across the globe. It is jointly produced with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media.

GUIDELINE



A new analysis, published in JAMA Internal Medicine, adds to the evidence that nonfasting lipid measurements are as clinically useful as fasting measurements.

Nearly 8,300 adults at increased cardiovascular (CV) risk had fasting and nonfasting lipid levels measured 4 weeks apart. Participants’ total, LDL, and HDL cholesterol levels showed “negligible” differences between their fasting and nonfasting samples, while triglycerides were “modestly higher” in nonfasting samples.

During a median 3 years’ follow-up, some 210 major coronary events occurred. Nonfasting and fasting lipid levels were similarly associated with incident coronary events – a finding that persisted in a subanalysis of patients without prior vascular disease. Additionally, nonfasting and fasting levels showed high agreement in terms of classifying patients into CV risk categories.

The researchers say their findings “provide robust evidence and more impetus for physicians to more broadly adopt nonfasting measurement of lipid levels for routine practice, in a manner consistent with ... recent guideline recommendations.”

HEALTH bulletin



Treatment changes for mild asthma?

Two new trials could lead to changes in the way mild asthma is managed. The findings were presented at the American Thoracic Society International Conference and published in the New England Journal of Medicine recently.

In the first trial, as-needed budesonide-formoterol was superior to as-needed albuterol – and did not differ significantly from maintenance budesonide with as-needed albuterol – for preventing overall asthma exacerbations in adults with mild disease. Severe exacerbations also occurred less often with as-needed budesonide-formoterol than with the other treatments.

In the second study, researchers found that most patients aged 12 years and older with mild persistent asthma had low sputum eosinophil levels. When these patients received mometasone (an inhaled glucocorticoid), tiotropium (a long-acting muscarinic antagonist), and placebo, there were no differences in their responses to either active treatment relative to placebo.

An editorialist concludes, “Evidence is building to question the role of as-needed [short-acting beta-agonists] as the step 1 treatment for mild intermittent asthma.”

Switch off food and drug allergy symptoms

DR TAUHIDA RAHMAN EREEN

An allergic reaction can be severe or life-threatening. Allergy usually shows up as itching, pain, skin rash, sun sensitivity, hives, watery eyes, swelling of the eyes, breathing difficulties, runny nose, vomiting and sneezing etc. If your allergy contributes to asthma, you may also experience difficulty in breathing, chest tightness or pain, wheezing, nasal congestion, poor sleep quality or even shock.

Food allergy: Food allergy is sometimes confused with or mislabeled as a food intolerance. Symptoms usually start as soon as few minutes after eating a food. Common signs and symptoms of food intolerance include digestive problems, usually bloating, gas or diarrhoea after consuming particular food. Surprising reactions happen when your immune system overreacts to foods that are normally harmless to others.

Preservatives, food color, additives added to many food to keep them from spoiling. They can act like ‘poisons’ for those who are allergic to those artificial food. Canned food, packed juice, soft drinks, pickles and dried fruits are loaded with preservatives. You will want to identify and avoid the food that seems to cause your allergic reaction. However, a food allergy is more likely with certain foods like milk, peanuts, seafood, soy, barley, eggplant, grains with gluten and sesame etc.



Drug allergy: If you have a drug allergy, you may be at risk of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. There are dozens of drugs that are allergic to your body. Some antibiotics like penicillin, tetracycline, ciprofloxacin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen and naproxen, aspirin, sulfur drugs and chemotherapy drugs etc. can be allergic.

There are the differences between side effects and a drug allergy. A side effect might occur in any person taking a drug. It typically does not involve the immune system. A drug allergy only affects certain people. Even if you have used them before, you can still have a reaction. If you have signs of an allergic reaction to particular drug, get emergency help.

If your allergens are diagnosed early, it might be controlled with

a gentle routine skin care product. All product allergies are caused by an immune system malfunction. Keep track of your products; it will help yourself make a solution. Sugar free minerals help to reduce oxidative stress and inflammation. Antihistamines are the mainstays for treating hives and other symptoms of some food allergies.

Do a liver cleanse: Preliminary research suggests that sugar free vitamin C may help liver detoxification and improve your immunity. A damaging immune response by the body to a substance, especially a particular food, pollen, fur, or dust, to which it has become hypersensitive.

Follow your dermatologist’s advice regarding skin care routine, nutrition, exercise and medicine. We cannot change the allergens but we can take steps to help our body win the allergy battle.

Predicting in utero HIV infection in newborns

HIV symptoms in newborns and insufficient prenatal care, limited antiretroviral therapy, and high viral load in mothers increased likelihood of in utero infection.

Successful programmes are in place worldwide to prevent mother-to-infant HIV transmission that occurs around the time of birth, but some infants are infected prior to delivery, typically resulting in early disease progression. Universal testing of infants in areas with high maternal infection rates identifies infected infants after the first month of life, but for infants infected in utero, earlier detection would allow for earlier antiretroviral therapy (ART).

To determine maternal and infant characteristics associated with high risk for in utero HIV infection, investigators studied HIV-infected mothers and 1691 infants who received HIV polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing at birth at a tertiary hospital in Pretoria, South Africa, where the rate of HIV in women giving birth was 22%.

Infants had excess risks for positive HIV PCR results if they were symptomatic at birth (such as with growth restriction, anaemia, or pneumonia) or if their mothers had <3 prenatal care visits, <4 weeks of ART, or viral loads ≥1000 copies/mL.



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6 Easy Ways to Reduce Stress in 20 Minutes or Less

For most of us, stress is a constant. Stress relief tricks that really work, no matter how much time you have.

1 minute: Breathe out

"When we get stressed, we tend to breathe very shallowly or hold our breath," says Domar. "Deep, diaphragmatic breaths increase your oxygen intake and create a sense of calm." To make sure you're breathing from your diaphragm (not your chest), place one hand about an inch above your belly button; as you inhale for a count of four, your belly should expand by about an inch.

2 minutes: Eat (a little) chocolate

A study published in the Journal of Proteome Research found that eating an average-size bar of dark chocolate (1.4 ounces) a day for two weeks helped reduce peoples' stress hormones. But in order to skip the blood sugar crash, Domar recommends having just one square: "Focus on enjoying it mindfully, without doing anything else at the same time."

3 minutes: Stare at a picture of a snowflake

Or a nautilus shell, fern branch or lightning strike. They all exhibit fractal patterns, which can help your mind unwind, per a University of Oregon study. When people took a break from a taxing task by gazing at fractal images, their stress response was 44 percent lower than when they looked at a control image.

10 minutes: Get crafty

A study in the Journal of Nursing Scholarship found that arts and crafts helped relax people who were caring for cancer-stricken relatives. If you don't know your knit from your purl, try one of the new coloring books for grown-ups, like the Posh Adult Coloring Book: Soothing Designs for Fun & Relaxation.

15 minutes: Brew some tea

"Green tea contains an amino acid derivative, theanine, that has been shown to impact alpha brain waves and promote a sense of relaxation," says Wendy Bazilian, RD, author of The SuperFoodsRx Diet. Chamomile has also been found to ease symptoms of anxiety. Even compounds in black tea may impact neurotransmitters in the brain: People who drank four cups a day for six weeks had lower levels of cortisol after a stressful event than a control group did, according to a study in Psychopharmacology.

20 minutes: Step outside

Taking a walk can increase your levels of norepinephrine, a chemical that helps the brain deal with stress, and doing light activity outdoors has been shown to greatly boost a person's mood and energy, according to researchers at the University of Essex in England. If you can't stop ruminating, consider listening to a podcast while you're out for a stroll. (One of our favorites: NPR's Invisibilia, which features short, engrossing tales about the forces that control human behavior.



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