

Calculating the Gender Asset and Wealth Gaps

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To design and track policies to promote gender equality, it is critical to have measures of the gender asset and wealth gaps. The lack of national level data on the gender asset and wealth gaps has hampered government efforts to reduce the vulnerabilities experienced by poor and marginalized individuals, households, and communities. Collecting data on the gender asset and wealth gaps is a feasible, important step towards the objective of gender equality and was successfully implemented in the Gender Asset Gap Project. This brief outlines how to calculate four key measures of these gaps.

Four measures can be used to establish whether there are gender inequalities in the ownership of physical and financial assets:

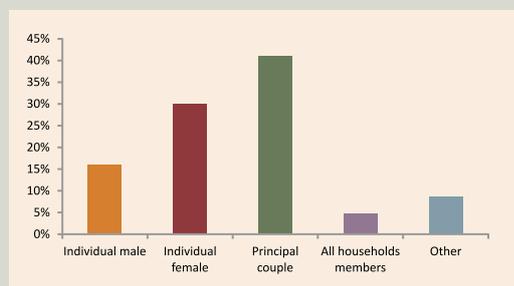
- The distribution of form of ownership
- The gender asset gap or incidence gap
- The gender wealth gap
- The share of female owners

Each measure has its own advantages and disadvantages, and no one measure can by itself totally portray a country's level of gender inequality in asset ownership. But when taken together, these measures provide a comprehensive picture of the gender disparities therein.

The **distribution of form of ownership** for a particular type of asset uses the asset as the unit of analysis. For each asset, information should be collected on who owns it, with the possibility of listing multiple owners. The owners can then be categorized as an individual male, an individual female, a couple, all household members and "other". (Categories may be created for other common forms of joint ownership, depending on the context, such as father and son, brothers, or siblings.) This measure tells us how the assets are

owned. **Figure 1** indicates that the most common form of ownership of the principal residence in Ecuador is joint ownership by the principal couple.

Figure 1. Distribution of the Form of Ownership, Ecuador, Principal Residence.

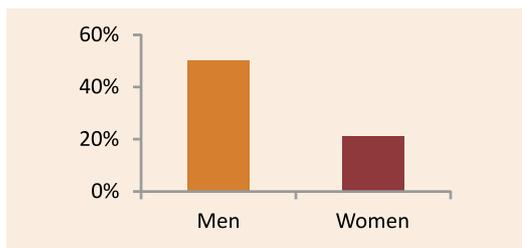


The patterns of individual and joint ownership differ widely across countries, but since a person's rights over an asset may vary depending on whether it is owned individually or jointly, this measure provides important insights. However, it does not reveal how many men and how many women own the asset. It also does not distinguish between a case where all of the assets are owned by one couple and one where every couple owns one asset jointly.

The **gender asset gap** indicates the proportion of women and men who own a given asset. To calculate it, the number of women who own the asset is divided by the total number of women (age 18 and above). Similarly, the number of men who own the asset is divided by the total number of men.

This measure is particularly useful for comparisons across time within one country or across countries, because it demonstrates both the differences in the incidence of ownership between men and women and whether the asset is widely owned. Thus, **Figure 2** indicates that 50% of men and 20% of women in Ghana own mobile phones. However, this measure does not take into account the variance in the quality and quantity of assets.

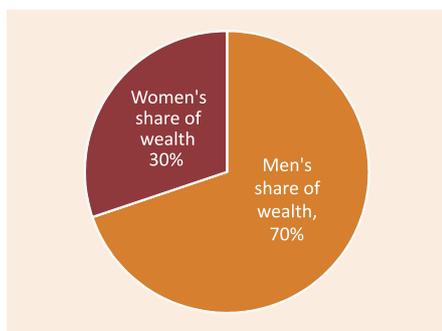
Figure 2. The Gender Asset Gap: The Percent of Adults who own Mobile Phones, Ghana.



The **gender wealth gap** resolves the quantity and quality issue by looking at the share of wealth owned by women for a particular asset compared to that owned by men. It is the one measure that can be aggregated across assets, so that the total gender wealth gap for all physical and/or financial assets can be calculated. For assets that are owned by multiple people, the value is divided equally among the owners.

The gender wealth gap is calculated as the value of women's assets divided by the total value of assets (i.e., women's share of asset wealth) compared to the value of men's assets divided by the total value of assets (men's share of asset wealth). When the number and value of assets differ among individuals, this measure captures these differences.

Figure 3. The Gender Wealth Gap for Physical Assets, Ghana.



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Finally, the **share of female owners** (the number of women who are owners divided by the total number of owners) can be compared to the share of asset value that is held by women. This indicator tells us if, on average, women own assets of less value than men.

Figure 4. Comparison of the Female Share of Landowners and Land Wealth, Karnataka, India.

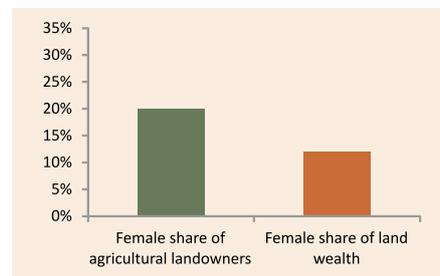


Figure 4 demonstrates that although women are 20% of the landowners in Karnataka, they only own 12% of the value of land. Thus, it indicates that women's land is less valuable than men's land. Yet, this measure does not tell us whether the asset value is concentrated in few individuals or held widely across the population.

With data on who owns the assets, three measures can be calculated: the distribution of the form of ownership, the gender asset gap, and the share of female owners. With information on the value of assets, the gender wealth gap can be calculated. Together these provide the means to monitor changes in the gender patterns of asset ownership and to develop policies that will strengthen women's property rights.

For more information, see the following resources:

The Gender Asset and Wealth Gaps: Evidence from Ecuador, Ghana, and Karnataka, India
Lessons from the Field: Implementing Individual Asset Surveys in Ecuador, Ghana, India, and Uganda
 Available at:
<http://genderassetgap.iimb.ernet.in/resources>



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