

BRIDGING THE GAP : ON INDIA AND GENDER GAP REPORT

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Paper - III (Social Justice)

India has climbed eight places in the annual Gender Gap Report, 2023, and is ranked 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity, from 135 last year. But this improved statistic, closing 64.3% of the overall gender gap, is hardly a cause for cheer. On the four key markers of the index – economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment – India has a window of opportunity to improve in each so that one half of the most populous country in the world may contribute to the economy, growth and overall wellbeing of society.

India has fared well in education, and in political empowerment, with representation of women of over 40% in local governance, thanks to efforts on the ground after the 73rd and 74th amendments. But, as the report points out, women represent only 15.1% of parliamentarians, “the highest for India since the inaugural 2006 edition.” This should spur Parliament to take it to the next level by acting on the long-pending Women’s Reservation Bill, which proposes to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women, and was first introduced in the House way back in 1996. To understand where things stand on women’s participation in politics, consider this: Nagaland, which became a State in 1963, elected its first two women MLAs only in 2023.

On providing even access for men and women on economic participation and opportunity, India ranks near the bottom with less than 40% parity. On the one hand, there are upticks in parity in wages and income,

Gender gap

India jumped eight spots to rank 127 in the Global Gender Gap Index, 2023. A look at how select countries fared

Rank	Country	Score	Rank change
1	Iceland	0.912	-
2	Norway	0.879	+1
59	Bangladesh	0.722	+12
103	Bhutan	0.682	+23
107	China	0.678	-5
115	Sri Lanka	0.663	-5
116	Nepal	0.659	-20
127	India	0.643	+8
142	Pakistan	0.575	+3



but then shares of women in senior positions and technical roles have dropped. Another concern is India's performance in health and survival, though an improvement in sex ratio at birth has driven up parity after more than a decade of slow progress. It is imperative that girls get access to education through all levels of school and college; and they also need paid work. Women end up doing so much unpaid work at home that many do not have the time or energy to opt for paid work. Providing girls with a job-assured education will automatically improve all development indices including nutrition, and break the vicious cycle of early marriage leading to poor maternal and child health. If the pandemic revealed the fragility of life, it was infinitely harder on women, with their labour participation rates dropping, thus reducing household incomes. Often, even if they get a job, women are constrained by patriarchal and cultural norms; besides, there are serious safety concerns. The pandemic may have stalled progress to achieve gender equality by 2030, but work towards bridging the gap must go on in earnest.

Gender Gap Report 2023

World Economic Forum has released the annual Gender Gap Report 2023. This is the 17th edition of the report. According to this report, India is ranked 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender equality, which means India has improved and moved up 8 places from last year.

Highlights of the 2023 report:

- ❖ No country has yet achieved full gender parity.
- ❖ For the 14th consecutive year, Iceland (91.2%) takes the top position. It also continues to be the only country to have closed more than 90% of its gender gap.
- ❖ India had improved by 1.4 percentage points and 8 positions since the last edition and had closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap. The country had attained parity in enrolment across all levels of education.
- ❖ India had reached only 36.7% parity in economic participation and opportunity. On political empowerment, India has registered 25.3% parity, with women representing 15.1% of parliamentarians.
- ❖ Pakistan at 142, Bangladesh at 59, China at 107, Nepal at 116, Sri Lanka at 115 and Bhutan at 103.

About Report:

- ❖ It is an annual index first published in 2006 by the WEF to measure gender equality.
- ❖ It evaluates any country's progress towards gender equality across four key parameters: economic participation and opportunity, educational opportunity, health and survival, and political empowerment.
- ❖ It assesses countries on how well they are dividing their resources and opportunities among their male and female populations, regardless of the overall levels of these resources and opportunities.
- ❖ It serves as a catalyst for greater awareness as well as greater exchange between policymakers.

Expected Question

Que. With reference to Gender Gap Report 2023, consider the following statements:

1. India's performance has improved as compared to last year.
2. India's performance is the worst among all its neighboring countries.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only 1
- (b) Only 2
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : a

Mains Expected Question & Format

Que.: 'India still suffers from inequality towards women in all three spheres political, economic and social.' Analyze the statement in the light of the recently published Annual Gender Gap Report 2023. (250 words)

Answer Format :

- ❖ At the beginning of the answer briefly discuss about the Gender Gap Report 2023.
- ❖ In the next part of the answer, discuss gender gap report 2023 in detail with reference to the statement.
- ❖ Finally, give a brief conclusion showing the way forward.

Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC mains examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.