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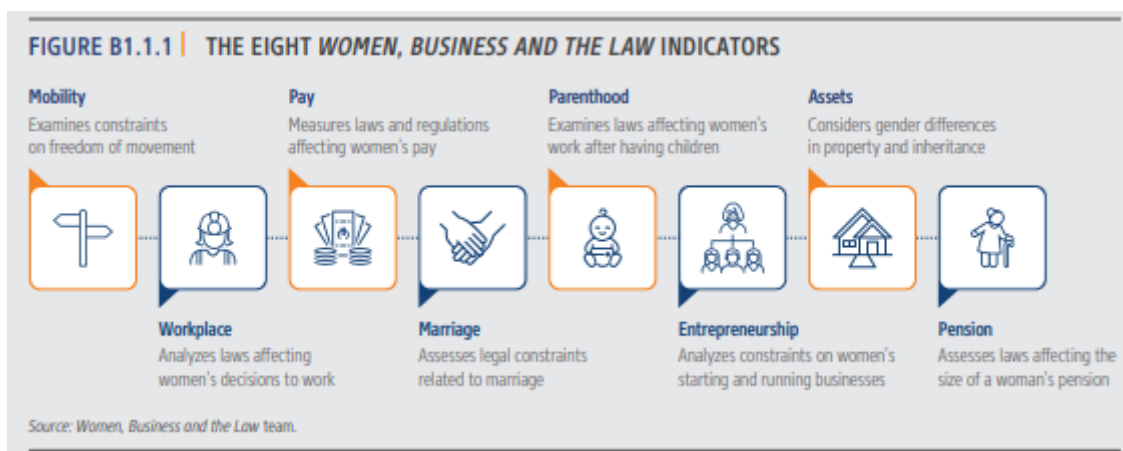
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Women, Business and The Law

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Introduction

Women, Business and the Law 2023 is an annual study measuring laws affecting women's economic opportunities in 190 economies. It presents eight indicators structured around women's interactions with the law throughout their lives and careers and identifies barriers to women's economic participation, providing important contributions to research and policy discussions about the state of women's economic empowerment.



The Women, Business and the Law 2023 report shows **women globally enjoy only 77% of men's legal rights**, with 1,500 reforms needed to reach gender equality. Progress has slowed since 2009, with only 14 high-income economies granting women equal rights. Reforms focus on violence, discrimination, and harassment, with weakest progress in Mobility, Assets, and Entrepreneurship.

Key Highlights

- **Mobility**

This indicator has the lowest number of restrictions in the Women, Business and the Law Report findings. 55 economies worldwide still restrict a woman's freedom of movement. While some positive reforms were made in Uganda and Gabon, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia enacted laws that reduced gender equality.

- **Workplace**

In 69 economies, women face barriers to work and are not protected from discrimination or sexual harassment. In 19 economies, women cannot get a job like men, and 30 do not prohibit gender discrimination in employment. Sexual harassment is pervasive globally, and 43 economies lack legislation to address it.

- **Pay**

Although gender-related legal reforms fell to their lowest since 2001, progress has been made in increasing paid leave for parents and fathers, removing restrictions on women's work, and mandating equal pay. Sub-Saharan Africa made the most significant progress, accounting for more than half of all reforms worldwide, while other regions such as East Asia and the Pacific, Middle East and North Africa, and other economies also introduced reforms.

- **Marriage**

No economy implemented reforms allowing women to be head of household like men, and no changes were made to make it easier for women to divorce or remarry. Women face restrictions on remarriage in 68 economies, and in 46 economies, women cannot obtain a divorce like men. Saudi Arabia enacted a law limiting women's rights in marriage. The law is not a regional exception; similar practices are codified in personal status laws in neighboring economies.

- **Parenthood**

Maternity leave is positively related to female employment. However, 72 economies do not mandate at least 14 weeks of paid maternity leave. Only 80 of the 118 economies that provide maternity leave offer benefits through public funds. The gap between mothers' and fathers' leave affects female labor force participation. 117 economies provide paid leave for fathers, but the length of leave is significantly shorter than that for mothers. 53 economies have legislation for parental leave.

- **Entrepreneurship**

Currently, 101 economies lack legal provisions that prohibit gender-based discrimination in accessing credit. This gap is present in all regions, with 88% of South Asian economies, 71% of Sub-Saharan African economies, and 68% of East Asian and Pacific economies lacking such provisions. Women's ability to sign contracts and register businesses are also important for their agency, and most economies allow women to sign contracts in the same way as men, except for two economies.

- **Assets**

Europe and Central Asia, OECD high income, and Latin America and the Caribbean are the highest-scoring regions on the Assets indicator, while the Middle East and North Africa lag. 57 economies do not recognize women's nonmonetary contributions to a household, and 19 economies do not grant women equal ownership rights to immovable property. 41 economies still differentiate inheritance rights between sons and daughters.

- **Pension**

In 37 economies, women can retire earlier than men and receive partial pension benefits, while in 63 economies, they can retire earlier and receive full pension benefits. However, 15 economies require women to retire earlier. In 107 economies, paid maternity leave is accounted for in pension calculations, except for Australia and the US.

Women, Business and the Law is expanding its research agenda to include **new indicators measuring childcare legislation and women's safety**, as well as reviewing areas in which legal equality has almost been reached, which will be published in the 2024 edition and fully integrated into the index and report in 2025.

Read More: [Women, Business and the Law](#)

Author: Gauri Kapoor, PILOT at Pratham.