



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

GENDER AND LAND STATISTICS



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Women dancing in a break of harvest
cabbages in Sorbeh community crops
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Secure tenure rights and control over land for women and men farmers are key to boosting smallholder productivity, rural development and food security. However, in many parts of the world, men and women have inadequate access to secure property rights over land.

Women are particularly disadvantaged: even though they constitute on average 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, women's ownership of agricultural land remains significantly lower than that of men. Women's lack of secure rights over land translates into lower productivity, perpetuating food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty.

Land statistics can provide a sense of women's economic empowerment in agriculture. Reliable sex-disaggregated data on land are essential to highlight the disparities in land rights between women and men, improve policy formulations and monitor the progress towards gender equality in agriculture and land tenure.

Unfortunately, land statistics have often been inaccurate due to the incorrect use of the concepts such as agricultural holder and landowner, often considered as synonyms. While both are important components of land rights, they are different and should not be confused. On the one hand, agricultural holders are the managers of the holding although they may not be the legal owners of the land. On the other hand, landowners are the legal owners of the land and, typically, have the rights to sell, bequeath, or lease it.

When addressing gender inequalities in secure rights over land, it is important to stress the distinction between agricultural holders and landowners. Indeed, women may cultivate and manage parcels but they may not be the owners and therefore, they may not have the rights (or incentives) to make productivity-enhancing improvements. Also, women may be the legal owners of land but they may not have access to it or may not be able to make decisions related to the use of the land because of culture, norms and lack of empowerment.

Towards more accurate land statistics: the GLRD

In order to take into account gender disparities in land rights across countries and monitor progress towards gender-equitable land tenure globally, it is essential to elaborate an harmonized framework for producing and interpreting sex disaggregated data on land ownership and management.

To this purpose, in 2014, FAO started a collaboration with International Food Policy Research Institute, Policies, Institutions and Markets (IFPRI-PIM) programme to develop a common framework for producing sex-disaggregated indicators for the FAO Gender and Land Rights Database (GLRD).

The framework includes five sex-disaggregated indicators. While the first indicator focuses on land management, the other four consider agricultural landownership.

Indicator 1: Distribution of agricultural holders by sex

Indicator 2: Distribution of agricultural landowners by sex

Indicator 3: Incidence of female and male agricultural landowners

Indicator 4: Distribution of agricultural land area owned by sex

Indicator 5: Distribution of agricultural land value owned by sex

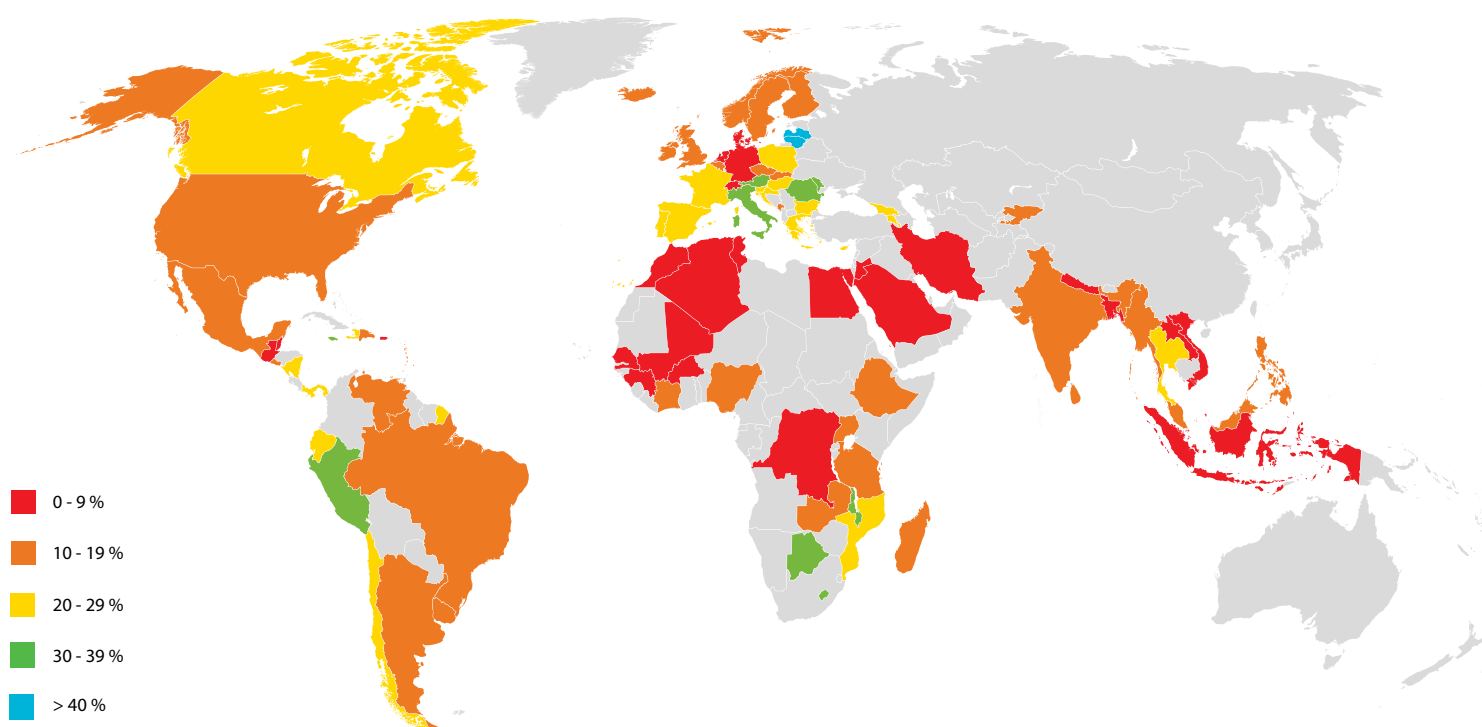
Indicator 1 - Distribution of agricultural holders by sex

Indicator 1 measures the percentage of female and male agricultural holders out of the total population of agricultural holders. The indicator focuses on primary managers of agricultural holdings, with the understanding that holders may or may not be legal owners of the holding.

This indicator is available for a great number of countries because information on agricultural holders is collected through national agricultural censuses. However, since this indicator considers the management of the agricultural holding as a whole, it does not capture the presence of men and women who separately own or manage few plots within the holding.

Therefore, it is essential to complement the agricultural censuses data with intra-holding level information on the different rights and responsibilities of women and men over agricultural holding. This highlights the need for elaborating separate indicators to capture the different rights and responsibilities of women and men over farm land. Figure 1 shows the distribution of female agricultural holders across countries. The map highlights large inequalities across regions and across countries in the same region.

Figure 1. Distribution of Agricultural Holders by Sex – Female



Indicator 2 - Distribution of agricultural landowners by sex

Indicator 2 measures the distribution of agricultural landowners by sex, that is the share of female and male landowners out of all landowners. This indicator is meant to make statistics on landownership comparable across countries.

However, identifying the legal landowners may be easier in some countries than in others. For instance, in places where much of the land is not formally titled or documented (such as Africa), surveys simply ask whether someone in the household owns the land, and if so, who is the owner. In addition, perceptions of ownership may vary widely across countries and even within the same country, due to the wide range of tenure arrangements and statutory and customary laws.

From the results in Figure 1 and Table 1, gender inequalities are evident, but the gender gap appears narrower when examining ownership (Indicator 2) rather than management of holdings (Indicator 1). This highlights the importance of using different indicators to understand land statistics.

Indicator 3 - Incidence of female and male agricultural landowners

Indicator 3 adds further nuance to the sex disaggregated statistics on land by showing the share of women out of all women in the country and the share of men out of all men in the country who own agricultural land. This is the incidence of female and male landowners. Where data are available, the indicator also distinguishes whether women and men own the land alone or jointly with someone else.

Graph 1 and 2 show the incidence of male and female landowners for selected countries from the GLRD.

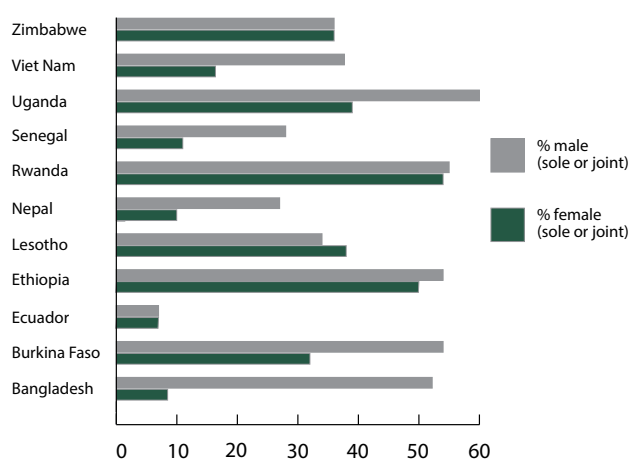
Country	Year	% female (sole or joint)	% male (sole or joint)	% female (sole only)	% men (sole only)	Note
Bangladesh	2011-12	8.5	52.2	NA	NA	Documented ownership
Burkina Faso	2010	32	54	12	43	Reported ownership
Ecuador	2010	7	7	NA	NA	Reported ownership
Ethiopia	2011	50	54	12	28	Reported ownership
Lesotho	2009	38	34	7	9	Reported ownership
Nepal	2011	10	27	10	25	Reported ownership
Rwanda	2010	54	55	13	25	Reported ownership
Senegal	2010-11	11	28	5	22	Reported ownership
Tajikistan	2007	NA	NA	4.3	28.6	Documented ownership
Uganda	2011	39	60	14	46	Reported ownership
Vietnam	2004	16.4	37.7	NA	NA	Certified land use rights
Zimbabwe	2010-11	36	36	11	22	Reported ownership

Table 1. The distribution of land ownership by sex . Source: Data in FAO Gender and Land Rights Database based on Doss et al (2015) for African countries, Kieran et al (2015) for Asian countries, and Deere et al 2012 for Latin American countries.

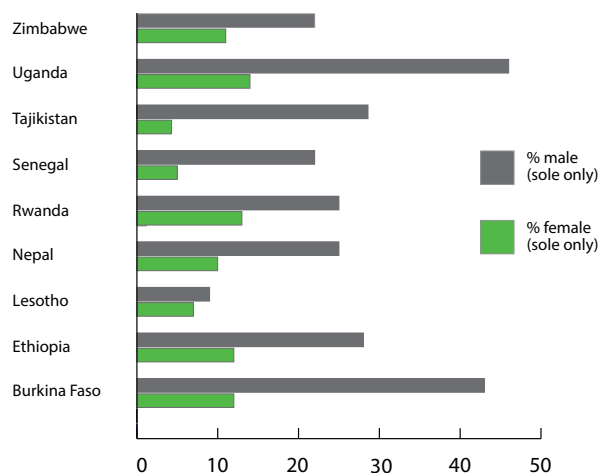
Data differ widely by country and depend on whether joint or sole only ownership is considered. Indeed, the gap between male and female landowners appears larger when considering female sole owners and male sole owners than when joint ownership is considered.

For instance, in Zimbabwe, 36% of all women and 36% of all men own land either solely or jointly with another family member. However, only 11% of women compared to 22% of men are sole landowners, suggesting that when women own land they are more likely to share the ownership rights with another family member rather than being the sole holders of those rights.

Graph 1. Incidence of female and male landowners (sole or joint).



Graph 2. Incidence of female and male landowners (sole only).



Indicator 4 - Distribution of agricultural land area owned by sex

Indicator 4 measures the distribution of agricultural land by sex, that is how much land women and men actually own. While the indicator does not tell how many men/women own land, it provides a good measure of how the land area is distributed between men and women, showing that women's plots are often significantly smaller than men's plots.

The indicator reveals significant gender-based differences in the amount of land owned by men and women, which should be taken into account when addressing gender inequalities in access to land. Table 2 shows that in nine countries available from Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, men own a larger proportion of land than women.

In the two Asian countries, joint ownership is a small proportion of total household agricultural land. Indicator 4 also provides information on how much of the land is owned individually by men and by women and how much is owned jointly. These patterns vary widely across countries.

Country	Survey Year	Distribution of Land Area			Distribution of Land Value			Type of tenure
		% female only	% male only	% joint	% female only	% men only	% joint	
Sub-Saharan Africa								
Ethiopia	2011-12	15	45	39	-	-	-	Documented ownership
Malawi	2010-11	40	42	18	39	39	23	Reported ownership
Niger	2011	9	62	29	5	59	36	Reported ownership
Nigeria	2010	4	87	9	10	78	11	Right to sell/use as collateral
Tanzania	2010-11	16	44	39	18	45	37	Reported ownership
Uganda	2009-10	18	34	46	15	34	51	Reported ownership
Asia								
Bangladesh	2011-12	10	88	2	-	-	-	Documented ownership
Tajikistan	2007	14	86	-	-	-	-	Documented ownership
Vietnam	2004	15	72	13	-	-	-	Certified land use rights

Table 2. The distribution of land area and land value by sex.

Indicator 5: Distribution of agricultural land value owned by sex

Indicator 5 attempts to capture differences in the quality of land that women and men own. It measures the share of land value (often self-reported land value) owned by women and the share of land value owned by men, and wherever possible, the share of land value owned jointly by men and women (often couples). Evidence shows that in addition to owning smaller

plots, women also own plots of lower quality. The proportions of land value owned by women range from 5% in Niger to 39% in Malawi, while the proportions owned by men range from 34% in Uganda to 78% in Nigeria (Table 2). In general, the proportion of land value owned solely by women is lower than the proportion owned solely by men.



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A women farmer harvesting longane fruits.
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