

Introduction

There have been some remarkable improvements in the state of women since the first edition of this atlas was published in 1986. Improvements in women and girls' literacy and education top the list of global success stories; women have won voting rights and the right to hold public office in all but a small handful of countries; most of the world's governments have signed international treaties committed to women's rights. The importance of such gains should not be underestimated.

But, overall, the "success story" list is depressingly short. Many women around the world have experienced an absolute decline in the quality of their life over the past decade. Improvements in one place are not necessarily transferable to other places: we remain a world divided. The globalizing new world economy is based largely on exploiting "flexible" markets of underpaid workers; women's participation in this new world economy is not an unalloyed sign of progress. The global gap between rich and poor has widened, and there are now more women and men living in dire poverty than a decade ago; women remain the poorest of the poor, everywhere. Around the world, "structural adjustment" policies coordinated and imposed by rich-world governments have plunged country after country into social and economic crisis; it is women who have borne the cost of managing the economic fallout. Wars have wracked several countries; in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Congo, Sudan, and Chechnya (among many others), millions of people are living under regimes of armed terror in wrenching conditions. Women bear a special burden of these wars, including horrific mass rapes, erosion of their rights, and the unrelenting demands of sustaining families and households in the midst of chaos. In former socialist countries, women are paying an especially high price for the transition to a free-market economy and society: everywhere this transition brings with it skyrocketing rates of violence and sexual exploitation, sharp increases in women's unemployment, an abrupt end to government support for healthcare, childcare, and housing, and even less representation for women in the emerging economic and political elites than they had in the old regimes. Religious fundamentalism and a resurgent conservative intolerance threaten women's rights in a wide range of states – and in a wide range of ways – across the globe. Millions of women around the world live their daily lives as little more than chattels. Large-scale systems of enslavement and oppression of women, including, prominently, sex trafficking, are flourishing.

Where is the outrage? Women do not automatically share in broad social advances: a rising tide does not necessarily raise all boats unless there is a commitment to do so. Feminists have often warned that gains in women's empowerment should not be taken for granted: they are fragile and reversible and always under pressure. This warning has never been more pertinent. At best we can say that from Pakistan to the USA, from Russia to Sierra Leone, the halls and hallmarks of power remain remarkably unperturbed by the oppression of women. At worst, evidence suggests that a remarkable number of governments in 2008 seem committed to turning back advances in women's autonomy.

Feminist organizing is stronger, more diverse, and more skilled than ever. International feminist networks have broken the isolation of women from one another; feminists everywhere are more informed about issues and perspectives from cultures and places outside their own immediate realm. Global feminist organizing is successfully redefining "human rights" to incorporate a broad agenda of "women's rights." Lesbian organizing has come out of the closet. As we enter the 21st century, we need public and civic leaders who will build on these

feminist foundations to make unflinching real – not rhetorical – commitments to social justice for women.

As a feminist, I believe that social analysis and activism can be enriched by an international and broadly comparative perspective. However, working at a global scale also inevitably entails a degree of generalization that is troubling – and, indeed, that if left unexamined can undermine feminist analysis. The world of women is defined both by commonality and difference. Women everywhere share primary responsibility for having and rearing children, for forming and maintaining families, for contraception. They share too the lead in fighting for women's rights and other civil rights. Rich and poor, they also suffer rape, health traumas from illegal abortions, the degradation of pornography. Nonetheless, if we have learned anything from the feminist movement of the past three decades, it is that global generalizations must not be used to mask the very real differences that exist among women country by country, region by region. There are significant inequalities in wealth and in access to opportunities from place to place; these are then refracted and magnified by social signifiers such as race, ethnicity, age, or religious affiliation.

It is as a geographer that I have found a way to strike a balance between the demands of acknowledging both commonality and difference: at its best, mapping can simultaneously illuminate both. Mapping is a powerful tool; in showing not only what is happening but where, patterns are revealed on maps that would never be apparent in statistical tables or even in narratives. The similarities and differences, the continuities and contrasts among women around the world are perhaps best shown by mapping out – literally – their lives. It is my hope that this atlas raises as many questions as it provides answers.

There are many people without whom this atlas would not have been completed – or even started:

As always, I owe special thanks to my partner Cynthia Enloe, who never ceases to impress me with her analytical grasp, her intellectual generosity, her astonishing understanding of the state of women around the world, and her expansive sense of humor; without Cynthia's unflagging encouragement and support I would not be able to imagine doing this atlas.

I was supported in this edition by a team of skilled and dedicated students and colleagues who provided outstanding research assistance: many thanks to Sohaila Abdulali, Amy Freeman, Mabel Fu, Kristina Schmidt, and Michael Wilkerson. My thanks to Hunter College for providing research support funding and facilities.

Special thanks and credit go to Annie Olson, co-originator and co-author of the first edition.

The team at Myriad Editions, Candida Lacey, Isabelle Lewis, Corinne Pearlman and Elizabeth Wyse, once again performed astounding creative, editorial, and production feats to bring this project to fruition; they never fail to amaze me with their outstanding insight and generosity. Many thanks also to Jannet King and Martine McDonagh who put their shoulders to the wheel in the last stages to enable us to finish the atlas more or less on deadline! I miss the friendship and inspiration of Anne Benewick, the founder of Myriad; I wouldn't have arrived here at the fourth edition without her companionship on the journeys of earlier editions. As an independent small publisher, Myriad wedges open a space within which radical and creative ideas can flourish and we all benefit from their dedication and

persistence. My special thanks to Myriad director, Bob Benewick, for his ongoing friendship and continuing dedication to the atlas series.

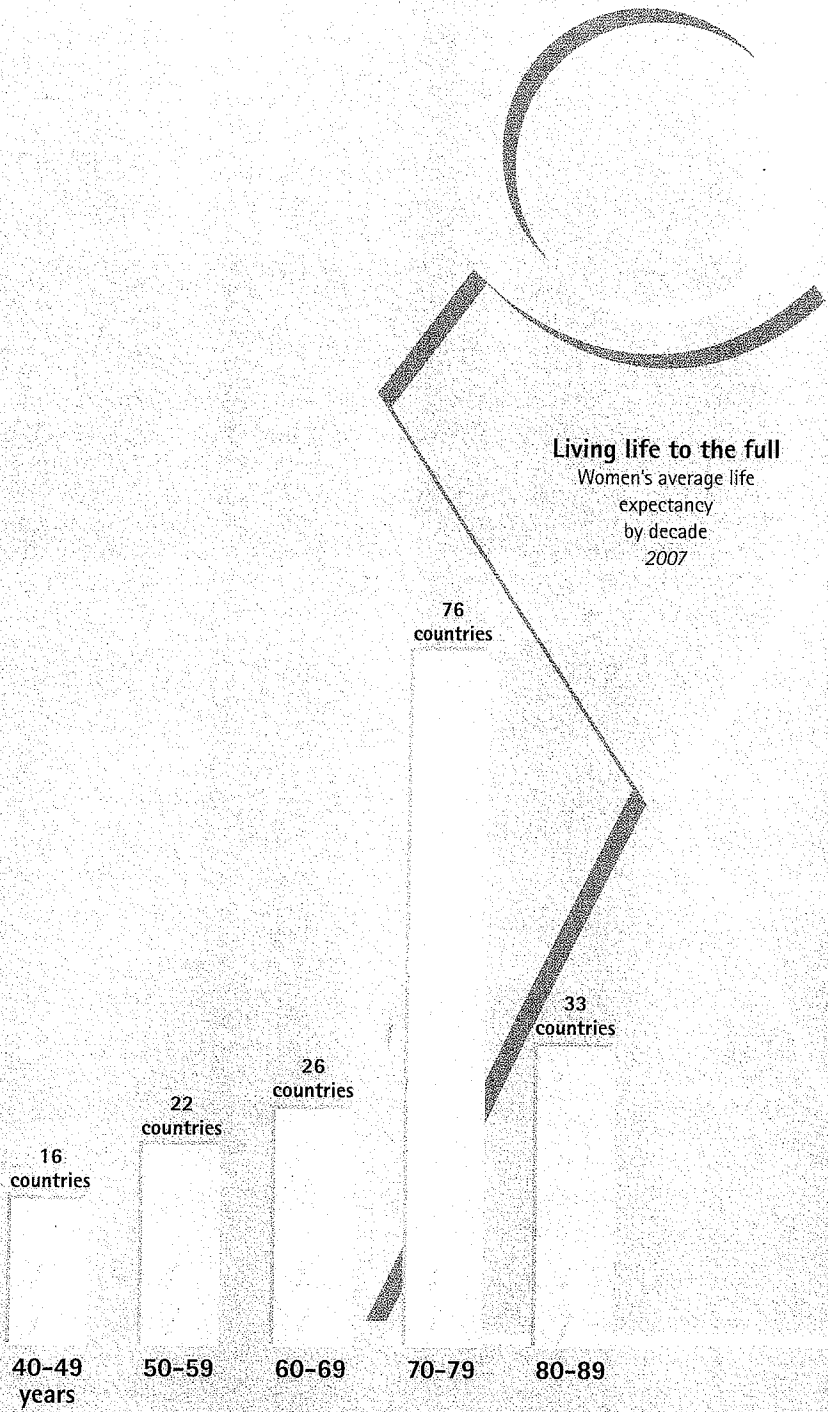
To my family, especially my mother Joan, my enduring thanks for their support, goodwill, and humour. To Gilda Bruckman and Judy Wachs, my extended family, I owe a great debt and thanks for the countless ways in which they enrich my life and expand my world. This atlas was further sustained by a wide network of friends, and I especially would like to thank: Julie Abraham, Alison Bernstein, Margaret Bluman, Mona Domosh, Madeline Drexler, Glen Elder, Tess Ewing, EJ Graff, Jane Knodell, Amy Lang, Wendy Luttrell, Louise Rice, Wendy Rosen, Robert Shreefter, Ellen Sippel, Laura Zimmerman. I am grateful for the inspiration and encouragement of my many friends and colleagues at the Center for New Words, the Geographic Perspectives on Women caucus, the University of Vermont, York University, Clark University, and Hunter College.

Many people provided assistance with specific maps or data, and I would like to particularly thank: Jenny Barrett; Lory Manning, Women's Research and Education Institute; Marilyn Dawson and Aparna Mehrotra at the United Nations; and Sophia Huyer, Women in Global Science and Technology.

Beyond these particular acknowledgements, I have never lost sight of the broader social and intellectual debt that I owe to the countless feminists – most unnamed and unrecognized – who, for years, and often at great personal cost, have been the only ones insisting that it is important to ask questions about where the women are. Without the collective support of women's movements around the globe, and the pathbreaking efforts of a persistent few, I would have neither the confidence nor the knowledge to undertake this atlas.

Joni Seager
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WOMEN IN THE WORLD



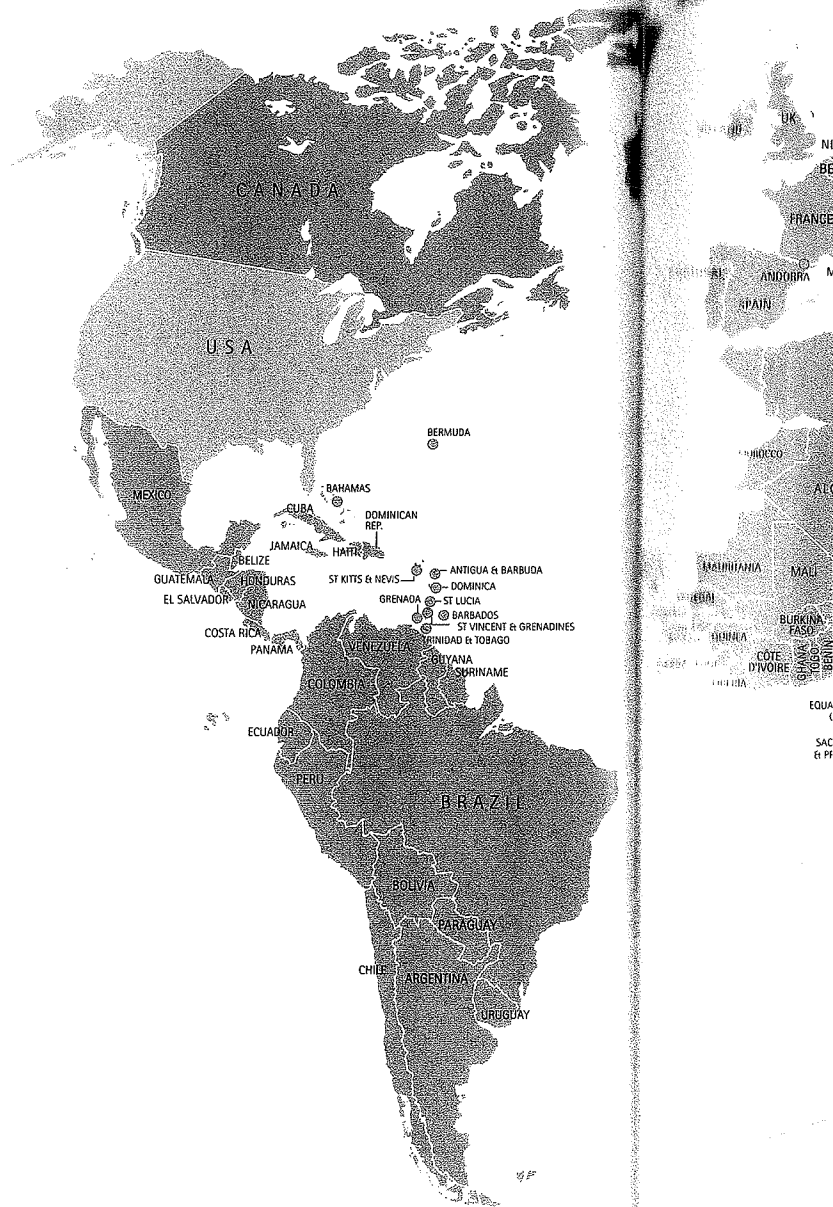
1 States Against Discrimination

Most of the world's governments are committed, on paper, to full equality for women. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a UN treaty, was adopted in 1979 and came into force in 1981. It was the result of years of organizing by women, both within the United Nations and in dozens of countries around the world. The final impetus for drafting the treaty was the 1975 UN Women's Conference in Mexico.

CEDAW is not the first UN treaty concerning the status of women. Several earlier treaties on marriage rights, political rights, and trafficking set the stage for CEDAW, and remain important in their own right.

CEDAW establishes a universal set of standards and principles that are intended to serve as a template for shaping national policies towards the long-term goal of eliminating gender discrimination. Governments that ratify CEDAW are obliged to develop and implement policies and laws to eliminate discrimination against women within their country.




As with many international agreements, the practical effectiveness of CEDAW has been mixed. Many governments have ratified CEDAW without demonstrating much effort to comply with the treaty. Nonetheless, CEDAW establishes a platform of minimum expectations to which women's groups can – and do – hold governments accountable.

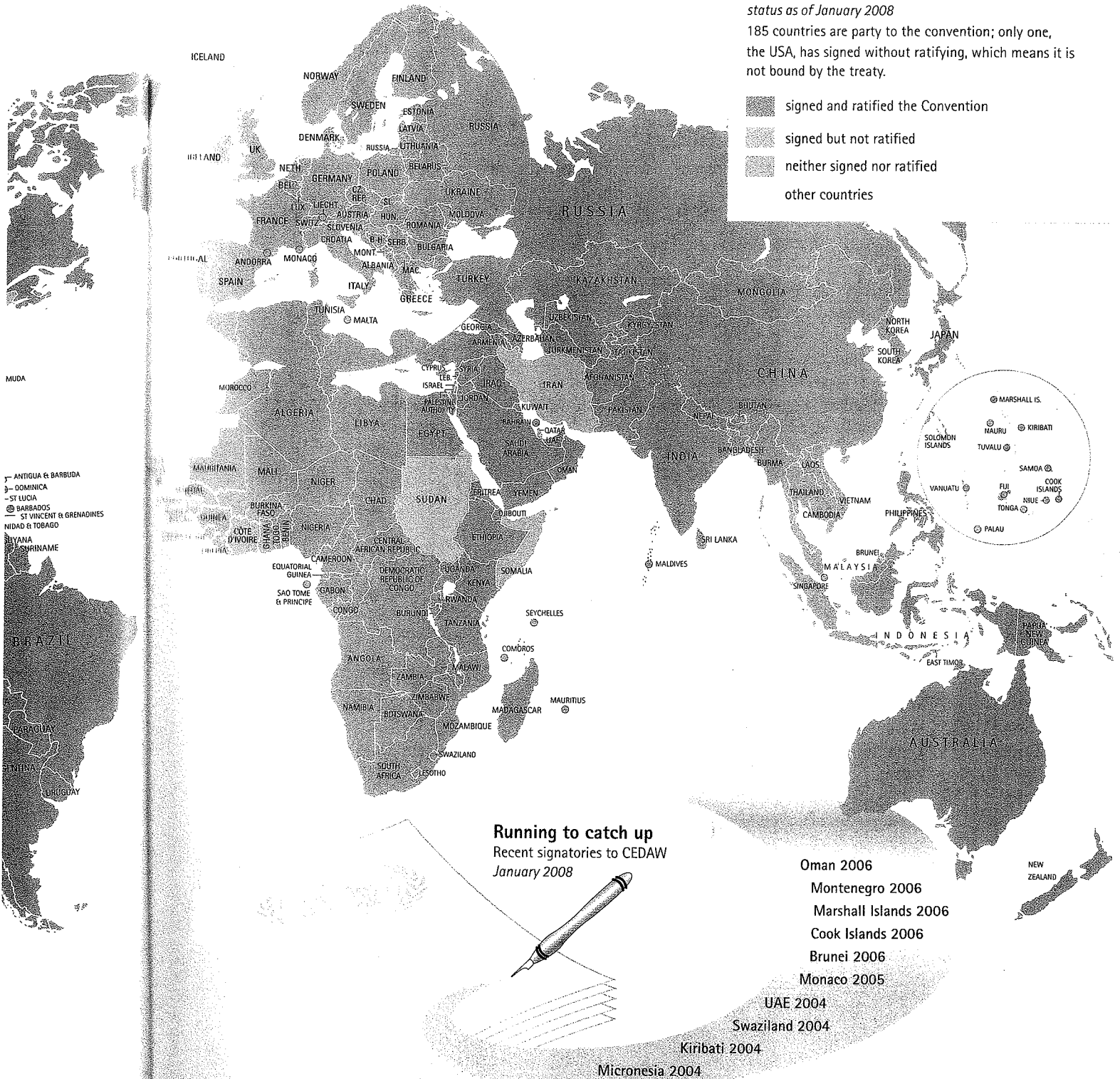


CEDAW

Signatories to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women *status as of January 2008*

185 countries are party to the convention; only one, the USA, has signed without ratifying, which means it is not bound by the treaty.

-  signed and ratified the Convention
-  signed but not ratified
-  neither signed nor ratified
- other countries



2 The State of Women

There is no easy way to compare the status of women around the world. Indeed, it is unwise to attempt to use any single lens through which to do so. Nonetheless, there are interesting ways to shed light on questions of overall status and general quality of life.

The Gender Development Index (GDI) offers one perspective. Developed by the United Nations Development Programme, the GDI assesses the extent to which countries have achieved success in three dimensions of human development: literacy, life expectancy, and income. These are then weighted according to gender disparities; the GDI thus ends up serving as a gender-sensitive measure of the state of a country's development.

Another lens through which to view the overall status of women is the Gender Gap Index (GGI), recently developed by the World Economic Forum. This index measures the relative equality between men and women in access to resources, regardless of the overall level of "development."

One of the points illustrated by both indices is that gender equality is, in part, a result of governmental commitments to equality principles and policies. For example, it is no coincidence that the Scandinavian countries rank very high in both indexes – these countries have adopted gender equality and women's empowerment as explicit national policies.

Life expectancy is an irreducible indicator of overall wellbeing. In most countries, women have an average life expectancy higher than their male counterparts, but for many of the world's women – and men – life is short and hard.

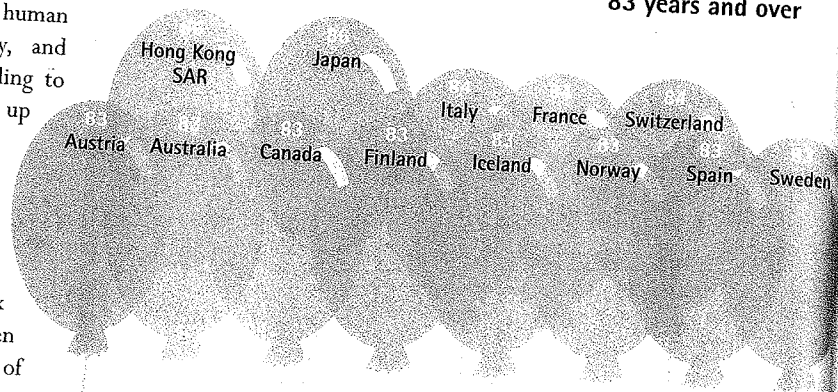
Lifetimes

Women's average life expectancy
2007

World averages
Women: 70 years
Men: 66 years

Highest
Women: Japan, Hong Kong 86
Men: Hong Kong 80, Japan 79

83 years and over

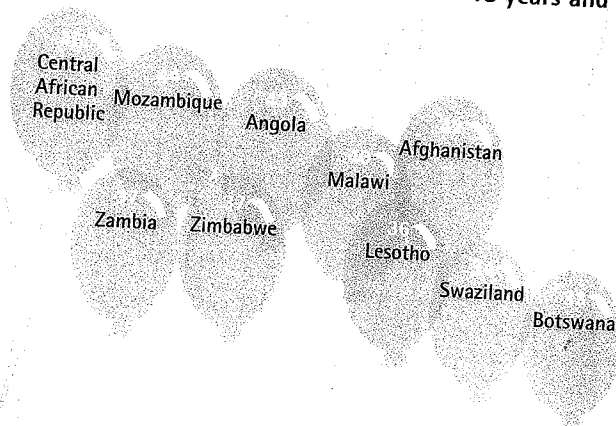


Women almost everywhere live longer than their male counterparts. But at the top and bottom ends of the scale, the gender gap closes.

Lowest

Women: Botswana 33, Swaziland 34
Men: Swaziland 33, Botswana 35, Lesotho 35

45 years and under



Taking it

Two indices

top 1

high 1

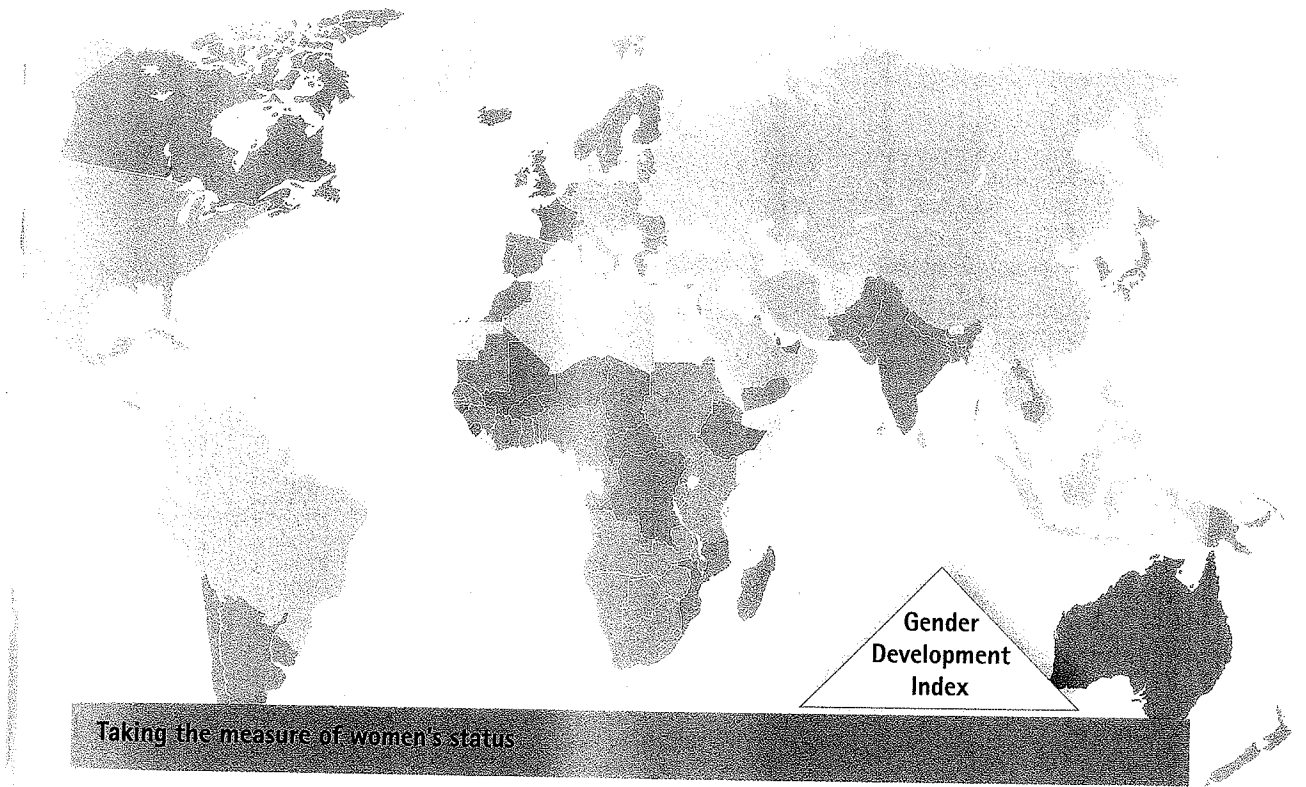
15 years and over

15 years and over

Switzerland
Spain Sweden

15 years and under

Botswana



Taking the measure of women's status

Two indices of women's status
2005-07

- top 10 countries
- medium rank
- bottom 10 countries
- high rank
- low rank

