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Mind the gap: gender equality and economic empowerment in the Commonwealth

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ABSTRACT

This article examines gender inequality in economic participation across the Commonwealth countries from 2008 to 2023. Using secondary data, differences in factors such as wages, leadership, enterprise ownership, digital skills and legal protection are explored. Findings show that while legal reforms have been initiated in some countries, progress is uneven, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Results indicate that a combination of legal frameworks, training and digital access supports gender equality. From the policy perspective, coordinated action to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 8 is suggested, as this will support female empowerment and equality across the Commonwealth countries.

KEYWORDS

Commonwealth; gender equality; empowerment; SDGs

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

SDG 5: Gender equality

Introduction

Gender equality remains a cornerstone of inclusive development. Women constitute 50.5% of the total world population, but the current global labour force participation rate for females is just under 47% in contrast to that for men, which stands at 72% (International Labour Organization, 2021). While female labour force participation rates have increased slightly, on average there is considerable heterogeneity across regions (Islam & Amin, 2015; Klasen et al., 2021; World Bank, 2022). Only 27% of women are managerial workers and a mere 18% of firms have a female top manager (Global Gender Gap Report, 2020). These figures highlight systemic underrepresentation and persistent structural barriers; these were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic that affected gender equality adversely in several ways through disproportionate job losses among women, increased unpaid care responsibilities, and widened gaps in access to digital tools and training on the job.

In this context, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, provide a critical framework

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for promoting women's economic empowerment. Economic empowerment is associated with enhancing women's access to and control over productive resources, markets and decision-making opportunities. The World Bank (2006, p. 4) defines this as 'making markets work for women (at the policy level) and empowering women to compete in markets (at the agency level)'. It is well established in the literature that when women are economically empowered, there are higher levels of economic growth, less poverty and more widespread levels of health, education, digital skills, training and welfare (see, for instance (Alao et al., 2022; Bimber, 2000; Hilbert, 2011; Mukherjee et al., 2024). Tornqvist and Schmitz (2009) suggest that 'women's economic empowerment can be achieved through equal access to and control over critical economic resources and opportunities, and the elimination of structural gender inequalities in the labour market including a better sharing of unpaid care work' (p. 9). Similarly, Golla et al. (2011) claim that women are economically empowered when they are able to succeed and advance economically, including making and acting on economic decisions. Economic empowerment is possible where women have access to opportunities and control of economic resources but in many societies barriers to female ownership and control are prohibitive.

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 diverse nations, which includes both advanced economies and developing countries. The Commonwealth encompasses nations from different regions: Africa (21 countries), Asia (8), the Caribbean and Americas (13), Europe (3), and the Pacific (11). However, the distribution of countries varies by income levels. For instance, high-income countries include Malta, Cyprus and two G7 countries (Canada, UK), whereas small developing states comprise Botswana, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia and Papua New Guinea. Analysis shows that the vast majority of Commonwealth members (33) are in the lower-middle and upper-middle income countries category.¹ More recently, the Commonwealth has made commitments to gender equality through its Charter, which is closely aligned with the SDG agenda. Despite broad commitments on ensuring gender equality, outcomes vary considerably across Commonwealth regions. Countries in Europe, North America and Latin America lead in gender parity but this is not the case for countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Pacific regions (Global Gender Gap Report, 2024). Despite progress in closing the gender gap, the report finds that at the current pace it will take 134 years to achieve parity. Gender equality is an under-researched issue for the Commonwealth, and there is lack of comprehensive analysis on enterprise participation, the wage gap, managerial representation, workforce training, digital skills and legal empowerment.

This article addresses this gap by analysing the trends, patterns and institutional determinants of gender inequality in the Commonwealth and the rest of the world between 2008 and 2023. We pose two research questions for Commonwealth countries. First, what are the trends and patterns of gender inequality in economic participation across Commonwealth member states? This focuses on examining wage gaps, firm ownership and leadership access by individual countries' income level, and how these compare with non-Commonwealth countries. Second, what institutional and policy factors shape gender outcomes? The analysis focuses on the role of legal frameworks, staff training and digital skills, and how these contribute to gender parity in the Commonwealth.

We use data for 36 Commonwealth countries and compare gender inequality trends across various parameters with 112 countries outside the Commonwealth group. The

period of analysis, the sample of countries in both groups and the variables are dictated by data availability (see endnotes 3–6). We use descriptive and inferential indicators to provide insights into the interplay between economic structures, legal frameworks and enterprise-level behaviours, and comment on how these impact gender parity within the Commonwealth countries.

Trends and patterns in gender inequality

This section examines the data from the period 2008 to 2023, which are the latest data available for the examination of gender inequality across the Commonwealth. We attempt to disentangle the digital-labour-managerial conundrum using a composite legal index for women in Commonwealth countries. We employ two established predictors of economic participation for women in labour markets and human capital skills with the focus on Women, Business and Law (WBL). This database explores the laws for women in the economic sphere, it is comprehensive for multi-country studies and has been used in extant literature (see, for instance, Amin & Islam, 2023; Iqbal et al., 2016; Islam et al., 2019; Rocha & Winkler, 2019). In terms of methodology, we compared gender inequality in the Commonwealth with the rest of the world on indices of wage inequality, leadership and ownership, gender representation at board levels, investments in training for staff, digital skills amongst the population, and legal empowerment and regulatory frameworks. We performed an exploratory analysis for Commonwealth countries and compared gender inequality trends with non-Commonwealth countries. We used descriptive statistics and deployed bivariate models to assess the relationship between gender outcomes (wage inequality, women's inclusion in leadership positions), staff training, digital skills of the population and legal regulations for women.

Table 1 lists the variables, data sources and the sample of countries with available information.

Table A1 presents the final list of Commonwealth countries included in the analysis and the dataset employed for each indicator.

Table 2 presents the average wage inequality score between men and women. The range varies from 1 (low equality) to 7 (high equality). A analysis shows that the Commonwealth countries have a wage inequality score of 4.78, which is higher than the rest of the world (at 4.54). But this figure masks variation when we examine the data by countries' income level. Interestingly, low-income Commonwealth countries enjoy a higher score (5.08) followed by high-income countries (4.81). The numbers suggest that low-income nations perform well in terms of gender wage equality; however, as these scores are derived from perception-based surveys, one can argue that these might reflect low female labour force participation or occupational segregation, which is often the case in gender participation. This suggests that fewer women participate in the perceptions survey, and hence inequality is perceived to be lower due to potential exclusion of other women from the sample surveyed and/or women working in low productivity units.

Analysis of gender equality in leadership positions, which employs a scale from 1 (low inclusion) to 7 (high inclusion), shows the average for the Commonwealth to be 4.75. This compares well with the global average of 4.57. A higher value for the Commonwealth countries is attributed to the fact that most of the countries are exporters, and studies show that the share of women in leadership positions is

Table 1. Variables, data sources and sample of countries.

Wage inequality between men & women (1 = high, 7 = low)	Executive Opinion Survey (EOS), World Economic Forum (WEF)	Commonwealth = 36 Rest of world = 112 ³
Inclusion of women in leadership positions (1 = low, 7 = high)	Executive Opinion Survey (EOS), World Economic Forum (WEF)	Commonwealth = 36 Rest of world = 112
Economic opportunity inequality gap between men & women (0 high, 1 low)	Quality of Government Dataset (QoG)	Commonwealth = 36 Rest of world = 112
Educational attainment inequality gap between men & women (0 high, 1 low)	Quality of Government Dataset (QoG)	Commonwealth = 36 Rest of world = 112
Health and survival gap inequality gap between men & women (0 high, 1 low)	Quality of Government Dataset (QoG)	Commonwealth = 36 Rest of world = 112
Digital skills of population (0 high, 1 low)	Legatum Prosperity Index (PI)	Commonwealth = 36 Rest of world = 112
Staff training (upskilling & reskilling) (1 = high, 7 = low)	Executive Opinion Survey (EOS), World Economic Forum (WEF)	Commonwealth = 36 Rest of world = 112
Women, Business and the Law (0 low, 100 high)	Women, Business and the Law, World Bank (WBL)	Commonwealth = 36 Rest of world = 112
Firms with female top manager (% of firms); Firms with female participation in ownership (% of firms)	World Bank Enterprise (WBES)	Commonwealth = 46 Rest of world = 110 ⁴
Share of female business owners (% of total business owners); Share of male business owners (% of total business owners)	World Bank Entrepreneurship Survey (WBENS)	Commonwealth = 20 Rest of world = 56 ⁵
Share of female directors (% of total directors); Share of male directors (% of total directors)	World Bank Entrepreneurship Survey (WBENS)	Commonwealth = 18 Rest of world = 38 ⁶

Source: Authors' compilation.

considerably higher for exporting firms located in low-income and upper-middle income countries (see, for instance, Allison et al., 2023; Amin & Islam, 2023; Rocha & Winkler, 2019). Moreover, the gap between low-income (4.88) and high-income

Table 2. Trends in gender inequality: 2008–2023.

	Wage inequality between men & women	Inclusion of women in leadership positions	Economic opportunity inequality gap between men & women	Educational attainment inequality gap between men & women	Health and survival inequality gap between men & women	Digital skills of population	Staff training (upskilling & reskilling)	Women, Business and the Law
Panel A: Commonwealth	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Low income	5.088	4.887	0.716	0.893	0.973	0.328	3.690	72.549
Lower middle income	4.649	4.458	0.603	0.909	0.966	0.442	3.830	65.369
	4.735	4.878	0.713	0.994	0.974	0.465	4.353	69.348
Upper middle income	4.814	4.967	0.698	0.993	0.971	0.744	4.636	87.915
	4.781	4.752	0.666	0.946	0.970	0.519	4.145	73.911
High income Total (N=36)								
Panel B: Rest of the world								
Low income	4.701	4.291	0.627	0.776	0.970	0.333	3.260	62.287
Lower middle income	4.641	4.504	0.628	0.932	0.973	0.463	3.647	73.050
	4.484	4.465	0.631	0.987	0.970	0.519	3.857	77.105
Upper middle income	4.489	4.750	0.672	0.994	0.973	0.721	4.564	84.630
	4.539	4.577	0.647	0.961	0.972	0.574	4.053	78.074
High income Total (N=112)								

Source: Authors' compilation.

(4.97) countries is small. One might interpret this as convergence but, again, caution is needed. In some contexts, there is biased representation, especially where fewer women are in top leadership roles. Furthermore, it is likely that high-income leading countries, namely, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, are the ones pushing towards more inclusive conditions for women in labour markets. We also examined the economic opportunity gaps, measured by the Global Gender Gap Index subcomponent, and the results show that the Commonwealth countries have an average score of 0.666, while it is 0.647 for the rest of the world. Upper-middle income Commonwealth members enjoy a higher score (0.713) and this can be attributed to progress in countries like South Africa, Malaysia and Botswana. But when we examine these trends in lower middle-income groups the gap is considerably wider, suggesting that progress is limited despite efforts to get more women into the workforce. We see that the wage and opportunity indicators confirm that trend, although the Commonwealth may appear slightly ahead of non-Commonwealth nations; there are still structural barriers in staff training and digital literacy skills that affect female participation in low-income and lower-middle income Commonwealth economies.

Table 2 also includes a standardised index of digital skills (0 = low, 1 = high). Results show that high-income Commonwealth countries perform better (0.744), suggesting that digital inclusion policies and infrastructure play an important role. In low-income Commonwealth countries, digital literacy is only 0.328, which is lower than the score (0.574) for the rest of the world. Further, if women do not have digital skills they are excluded from high-growth sectors, namely finance, tech and logistics. This also reduces women's ability to benefit from e-commerce and flexible work opportunities that digitalisation offers. Similarly, staff training, which is measured on a 1–7 scale, remains low in low-income and lower-middle-income countries. The findings also reveal that Women, Business and the Law score high-income Commonwealth members high on the index (87.9) unlike lower-middle-income and low-income countries that lag (65.4 and 72.5, respectively).

Studies discuss the gender wage gap, i.e. difference in earnings between men and women working in the same industries and firms (Bayard et al., 2003; Heinze & Wolf, 2010). A considerable body of literature on the metaphor 'the glass ceiling', widely used to describe low female representation in top professions, highlights 'low representativeness of women in senior positions' (see for example Carli & Eagly, 2016; Dozier, 1988; World Economic Forum, 2020, 2024). There is considerable literature on women's participation in the workforce that identifies factors affecting female participation in top roles; these include organisational behaviour, institutional factors and social norms (see Audretsch et al., 2022; Borrowman & Klasen, 2020; Klasen et al., 2021; Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2021).

In terms of ownership, studies find that 'in the foreign-owned firms, the returns to individual, job, and firm characteristics earned by women are much lower than the returns earned by men' (Magda & Sařach, 2021, p. 2237). The perception of women's roles in the workplace as managers and supervisors also affects women's participation, especially in managerial roles (for review see Huffman et al., 2013; Stainback, 2017). Others include culture and societal attitude to gender roles, which affects female

participation rate in the workforce and leads to gender segregation (Harris & Firestone, 1998, p. 239; Smith et al., 2011).

The exploratory analysis allowed us to analyse the bigger picture of leadership roles for women in labour markets. Figure 1(a,b) shows that, despite improvements, women’s participation in managerial positions and firm ownership has improved only marginally. Across countries of different income levels, less than one-third of firms are owned or led by women. In low-income and lower-middle income countries of the Commonwealth, the figures are lower, below 30%. This can be explained by multiple barriers in terms of limited access to capital, legal biases and cultural norms.

Ownership gaps present interesting findings (Figure 1b). In some high-income countries, such as Malta and Mauritius, there is greater female participation in firm ownership. Interestingly, women’s participation is higher in micro- and small enterprises. This

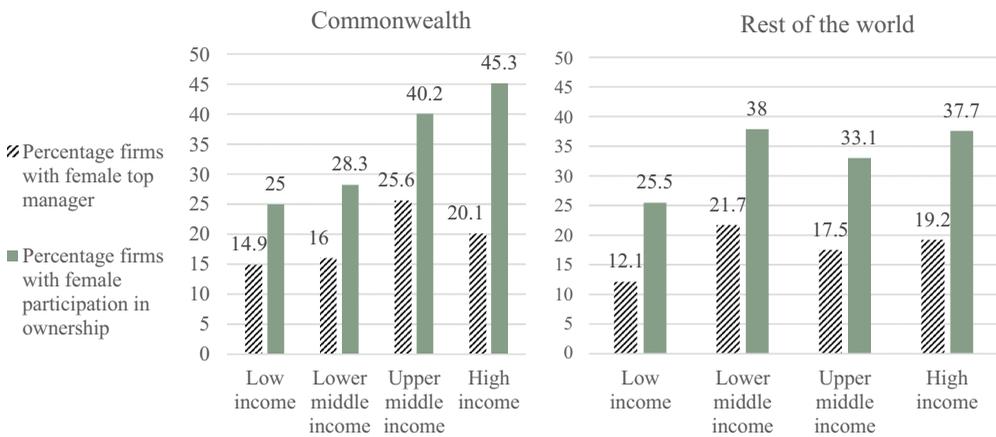


Figure 1a. Access to managerial positions and firm participation (2008–2023). Note: The Commonwealth sample includes 46 countries. A total of 10 countries were excluded due to missing information. Source: Authors’ compilation.

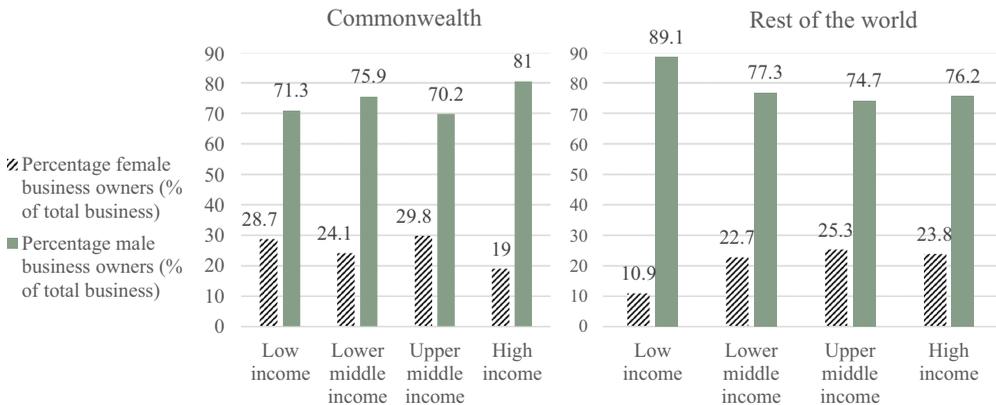


Figure 1b. Gender gaps and firm ownership 2008–2023. Note: The Commonwealth sample includes 20 countries. A total of 36 countries were excluded due to missing information. Source: Authors’ compilation.

suggests that male-owned firms grow due to access to capital, unlike female-owned businesses, which are restricted due to lack of access to finance. In terms of managerial access, the position is slightly better. Results show that, in many Commonwealth countries, female leaders are over-represented in human resources and administrative roles, but the group remains under-represented in operations, finance or strategic functions.

Studies also suggest that barriers also emanate from interrelated causes and are part of a complex system of social, cultural and economic determinants (Cavalcanti & Tavares, 2015). Such traditional attitudes to gender equality may inhibit the acceptance of female managers within firms. Sundström et al. (2017) highlight legal restrictions (e.g. on travel without permission for women) complemented by customary restrictions as barriers to gender empowerment. Bussemakers et al. (2017) find that female employment is on average lower in countries with conservative settings. A number of studies stress the decision to work is not a woman's own, as her actions are influenced by men and linked to social and cultural circumstances that resist change and constrain women's independence and autonomy (Haugh & Talwar, 2016; Sen, 1993; Subramaniam, 2011). Using WBL dimensions, namely, mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets, pension – and one question from the pay sub-dimension²: Can a woman work in an industrial job in the same way as a man? – we empirically assess the intersectionality perspective of women in Commonwealth countries compared with the rest of world. Figures 2 and 3 provide suggestive evidence that deconstruction plays a key role in shaping economic participation for women. We find substantial heterogeneity within WBL dimensions, legal regulations for industrial jobs and inclusion of women in leadership positions. For Commonwealth countries, we observe that mobility and workplace dimensions are negatively correlated to leadership position roles. An explanation for this result is the prevalence of informal work (mostly in developing countries) as well as time allocation differences for domestic housework away from labour market activities and leadership positions (Duflo, 2012; Islam et al., 2019; Khattab et al., 2020). Figure 3 confirms that countries' legal gender regulations supporting equal access to industrial jobs increase the access to leadership positions for marginalised women. This evidence echoes extant literature on gender inequality, economic participation in international trade and social institutions (see for example, Branisa et al., 2013; Laperle-Forget & Gurbuz Cuneo, 2024). For Commonwealth countries, we posit that the lower performance in mobility and workplace dimensions could be addressed by inclusive policies to promote formal education through training programmes and use of digital tools.

Figure 4 contains information on gender balance on corporate boards and presents evidence of women being under-represented in both developed and developing countries.

The Commonwealth average (excluding high-income economies) is higher than that of developing countries from the rest of the world, and this is due to gender quotas or disclosure requirements regulations. Within the Commonwealth, small countries such as Malta and Mauritius have stronger representation, due to a stronger institutional framework for gender policies and cultural issues. However, in countries such as India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zambia, males dominate boardrooms either due to prevalence of family-

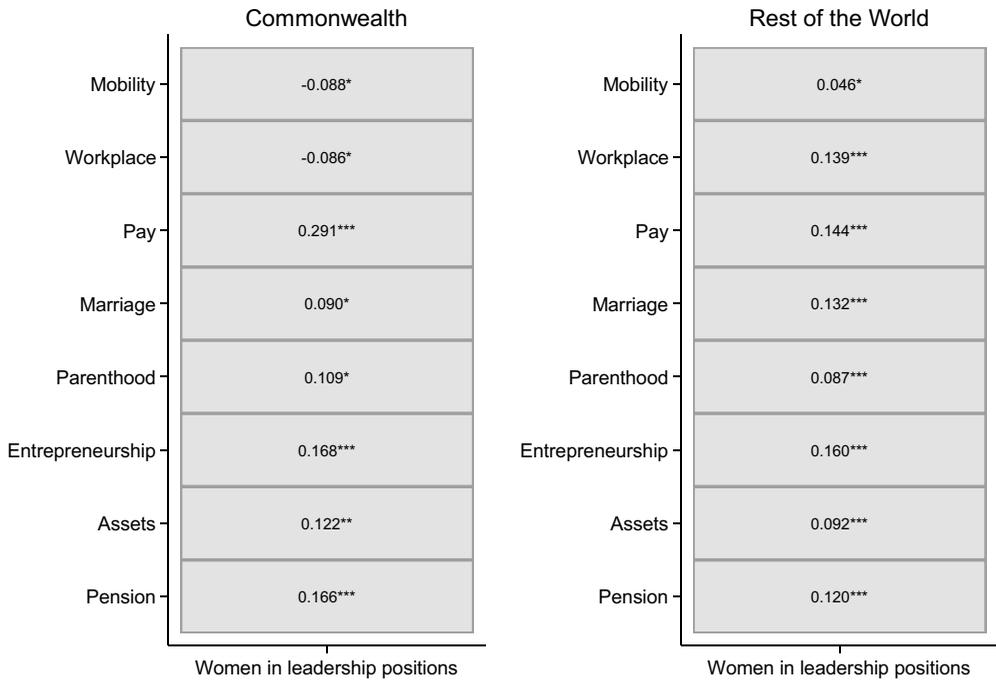


Figure 2. Pairwise correlations of Women, Business and the Law subdimensions and access to leadership positions: 2008–2023. Note: The symbols *, **, and *** denote significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively. Source: Authors’ compilation.

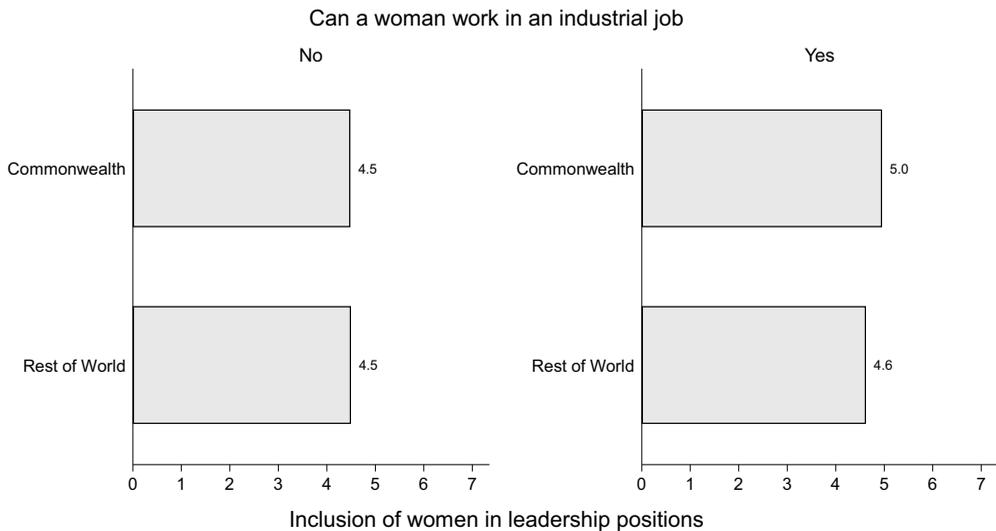


Figure 3. Access to leadership positions in manufacturing industries: 2008–2023. Source: Authors’ compilation based on WBL database.

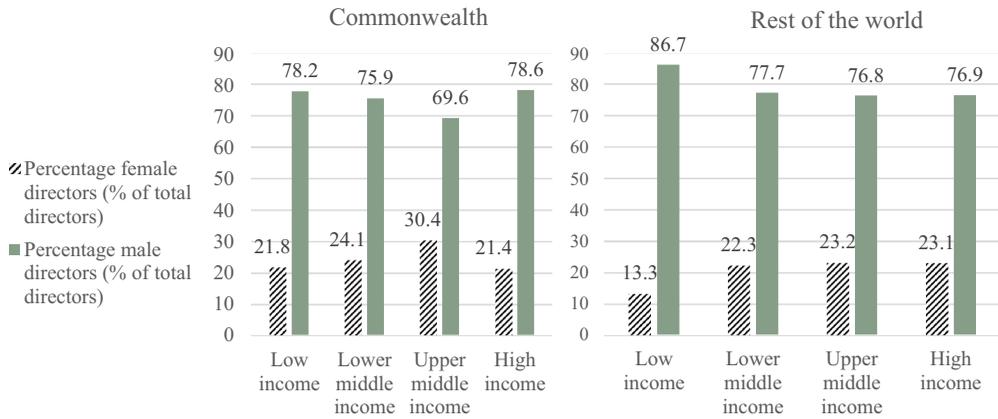


Figure 4. Board composition and gender (2008–2023). Note: The Commonwealth sample includes 18 countries. A total of 38 countries were excluded due to missing information. Source: Authors’ compilation.

owned business traditions or weaker enforcement of corporate governance norms. This suggests that unless there are legal regulations on board quotas and disclosure requirements, enforcement of rules for gender equality are likely to be limited.

The analysis also provides evidence on the relationship between wage inequality, staff training and access to leadership positions. Figures (below) show that investment in staff for upskilling and reskilling is strongly correlated with gender outcomes. Figure 5 shows that higher training levels in countries with robust female business regulations and support reduce wage gaps.

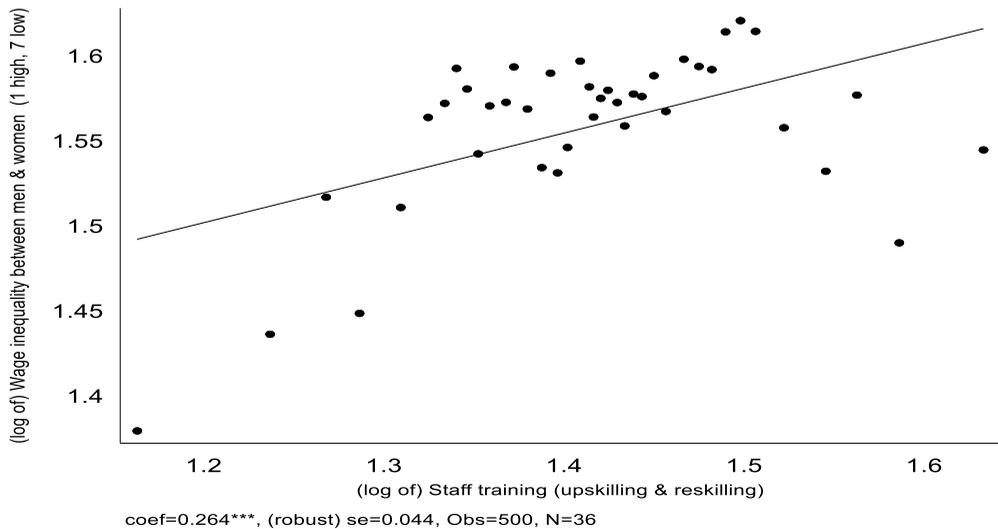


Figure 5. Wage inequality, training and legal regulations in the Commonwealth. Note: The sample includes 36 countries from the Commonwealth. To reduce concerns for the omitted bias the model includes the log change in the Women Business and the Law index between 2008 and 2023, region and year fixed effects. Source: Authors’ compilation.

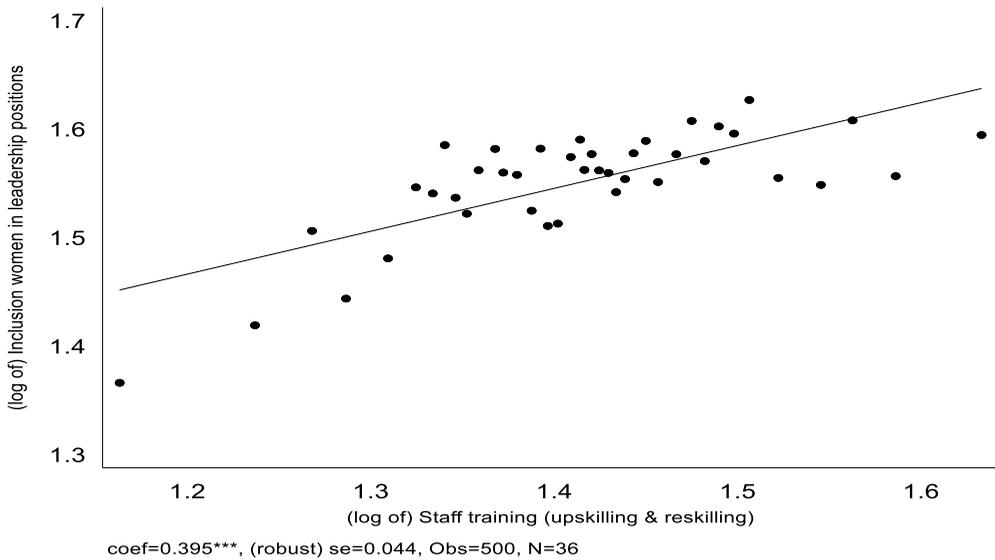


Figure 6. Access to managerial positions, training and legal regulations in the Commonwealth. Note: The sample includes 36 countries from the Commonwealth. To reduce the omitted bias the model includes the log change in the Women Business and the Law index between 2008 and 2023, region and year fixed effects. Source: Authors compilation.

Figure 6 links training practices with improved access to managerial roles for women, which highlights that firm-level investment, when complemented by Institutional policies and better regulations towards women, deliver positive results. However, training is not the panacea. In countries where the legal framework does not support gender policies, for example, where maternity-related provisions are weak, the gains for women are limited. In this respect, the Women, Business and the Law index is particularly useful to assess gender trends. The Index highlights the presence of gender-related legal frameworks on issues such as property rights, mobility, workplace protections and pensions.

When the effect of digital skills is included while accounting for the log change in WBL scores between 2008 and 2023 (Figures 7 and 8), the relationship shows an improvement in gender equality outcomes. This suggest that countries with higher literacy skills and improved legal frameworks perform better on female wage equality and access to leadership positions.

Figure 8 presents a positive and statistically significant relationship between digital skills and women in positions of leadership. As digital literacy increases, the representation of women in leadership roles also increases. The coefficient (0.080, $p < 0.01$) suggests that digital access plays a meaningful role in supporting higher levels of gender equality in leadership.

But legal reform and digitalisation alone are not a solution. If countries have weak enforcement, a lower level of digitalisation and where social norms are not aligned with legal texts, progress in gender parity is likely to be adversely impacted.

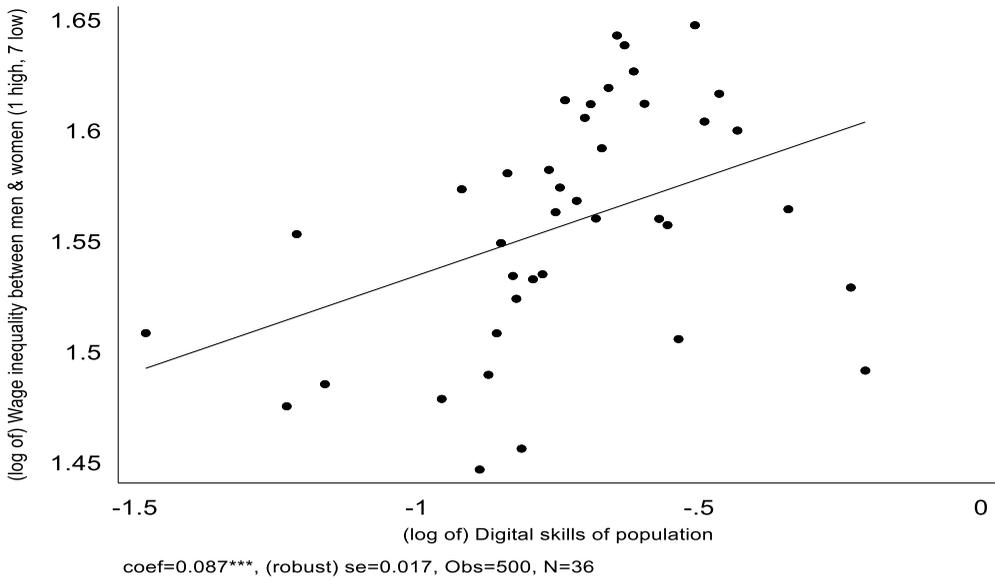


Figure 7. Wage inequality, digital skills and legal regulations in the Commonwealth. Note: The sample includes 36 countries from the Commonwealth. To reduce omitted bias the model includes the log change in the Women Business and the Law index between 2008 and 2023, region and year fixed effects. Source: Authors' compilation.

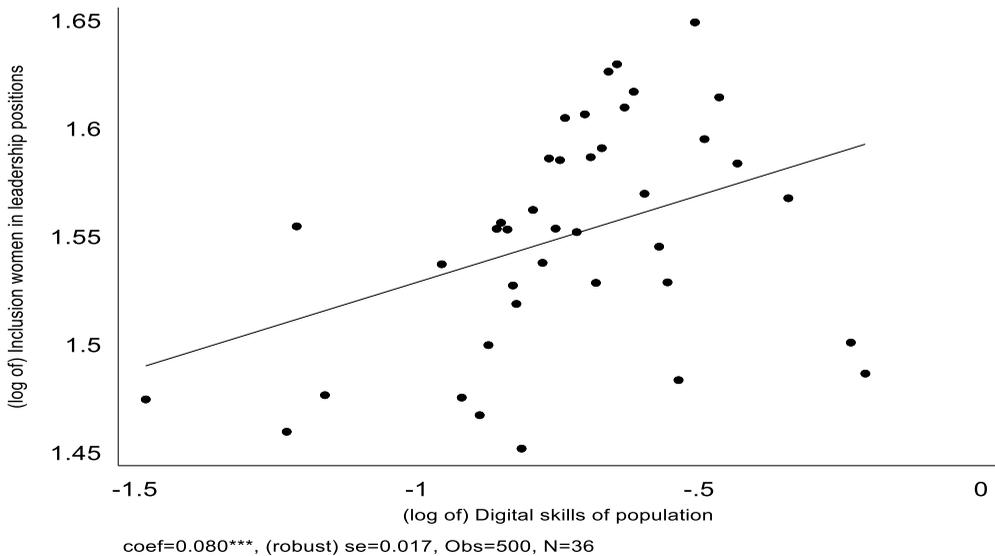


Figure 8. Access to managerial positions, digital skills and legal regulations in the Commonwealth. Note: The sample includes 36 countries from the Commonwealth. To reduce omitted bias our model includes the log change in the Women Business and the Law index between 2008 and 2023, region and year fixed effects. Source: Authors' compilation.

Implications for policymakers

The foregoing analysis highlights persistent gender disparities across multiple economic indicators in the Commonwealth. While progress has been made in health and education, significant gaps remain in economic participation, enterprise ownership, board representation and wage equality. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated and sustained policy response that is both inclusive and evidence driven. To do so, policymakers must focus on changes that are inclusive and measurable.

There is an urgent need for strong legal and regulatory reforms in the Commonwealth. Many Commonwealth countries still lack basic laws on women's mobility, economic rights or access to justice. While some have aligned regulations with international frameworks such as the Women, Business and the Law indicators, the reforms that support gender parity have been limited. To support the aim of gender equality it is important that there is legal parity across employment, finance, entrepreneurship and property rights. Further, governments need to invest in ensuring that gender-related laws are accessible and enforceable in the informal economy. This must be complemented by awareness-raising, legal aid, and stronger oversight mechanisms to ensure compliance. National regulatory bodies with gender equality mandates can play an important role in ensuring gender equality.

Improving access to training and workforce development especially for women is needed. Countries that have invested in staff training, namely digital and technical skills, demonstrate a positive impact on wage equality and managerial representation. But women, especially in lower-income countries, do not benefit as much as in higher-income countries. To address this, governments could consider incentivising firms to adopt gender-targeted training through tax reliefs, subsidies, and/or public-private partnerships. In addition, education systems must provide digital skills training, as this will allow young women to enter high-growth sectors such as ICT. For women entrepreneurs, access to finance is a critical barrier. In many Commonwealth countries, women-owned businesses are mostly prevalent in low-growth sectors. To ensure women participate in higher growth sectors, governments must promote collateral-free lending schemes and credit guarantees, and provide women with access to business support services. Improving women's representation in corporate leadership and governance is another area that requires attention given that the representation of women on corporate boards remains low across most Commonwealth countries.

Conclusion

This article presents trends and patterns of gender inequality in economic participation across the Commonwealth countries for the period 2008–2023. While some progress has been made in health, education and legal reform, there is evidence of disparities in terms of wage equality, leadership access, digital inclusion and workforce training. These gaps are evident in low-income Commonwealth countries, which highlights the need to initiate reforms to support women's economic empowerment. We find that legal frameworks in combination with training and digital access improves gender outcomes. This suggests that

gender equality requires an integrated approach such that policies are interlinked with SDGs 5 and 8 to ensure that the empowerment programmes are sustainable. There is a lack of disaggregated data by gender, and this is often an issue faced in many Commonwealth countries as these do not publish gender-disaggregated economic statistics for designing effective policies. It is important to mention that addressing gender inequality in the Commonwealth requires a concerted effort, but if it is backed by political will and an institutional framework, gender parity will not be simply a dream for many women in the years to come.

Notes

1. The World Bank assigns economies into four income groups: low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high. Details of the thresholds and the classification are available at <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/world-bank-country-classifications-by-income-level-for-2024-2025>.
2. Definition of the indicators, dimensions and index construction is available at <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/methodology>.
3. The list of Commonwealth countries without information comprises Antigua and Barbuda; Bahamas; Barbados; Brunei Darussalam; Dominica; Fiji; Grenada; Kiribati; Nauru; Papua New Guinea; Saint Lucia; Samoa; Solomon Islands; St Kitts and Nevis; St Vincent and The Grenadines; Togo; Tonga; Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
4. The list of Commonwealth countries without information comprise Australia; Brunei; Darussalam; Canada; Fiji; Kiribati; Maldives; Nauru; Tonga; Tuvalu; and the United Kingdom.
5. The list of Commonwealth countries without information comprises Antigua and Barbuda; Australia; Bahamas, The; Bangladesh; Barbados; Belize; Botswana; Cameroon; Canada; Cyprus; Eswatini; Fiji; Gabon; The Gambia; Ghana; Grenada; Guyana; India; Kenya; Malawi; Maldives; Nauru; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Seychelles; Singapore; Solomon Islands; South Africa; Sri Lanka; St Kitts and Nevis; St Vincent and the Grenadines; Tanzania; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago; Uganda; and the United Kingdom.
6. The list of Commonwealth countries without information comprises Antigua and Barbuda; Australia; Bahamas; Bangladesh; Barbados; Belize; Botswana; Cameroon; Canada; Cyprus; Dominica; Eswatini; Fiji; Gabon; The Gambia; Ghana; Grenada; Guyana; Kenya; Malawi; Maldives; Mozambique; Nauru; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Seychelles; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; St Kitts and Nevis; St Lucia; St Vincent and the Grenadines; Tanzania; Trinidad and Tobago; Tuvalu; Uganda; the United Kingdom; and Vanuatu.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix A

Table A1. List of countries.

Country	Income classification	Region	Group
Australia	High income	East Asia and Pacific	Commonwealth
Bangladesh	Lower middle income	South Asia	Commonwealth
Belize	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Commonwealth
Botswana	Upper middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Cameroon	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Canada	High income	North America	Commonwealth
Cyprus	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Commonwealth
Eswatini	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Gabon	Upper middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Gambia	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Ghana	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Guyana	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Commonwealth
India	Lower middle income	South Asia	Commonwealth
Jamaica	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Commonwealth
Kenya	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Lesotho	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Malawi	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Malaysia	Upper middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Commonwealth
Malta	High income	Middle East and North Africa	Commonwealth
Mauritius	High income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Mozambique	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Namibia	Upper middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
New Zealand	High income	East Asia and Pacific	Commonwealth
Nigeria	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Pakistan	Lower middle income	South Asia	Commonwealth
Rwanda	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Seychelles	High income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Sierra Leone	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Singapore	High income	East Asia and Pacific	Commonwealth
South Africa	Upper middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Sri Lanka	Lower middle income	South Asia	Commonwealth
Tanzania	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Trinidad and Tobago	High income	Latin America and Caribbean	Commonwealth
Uganda	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
United Kingdom	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Commonwealth
Zambia	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Commonwealth
Albania	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Algeria	Lower middle income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Angola	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Argentina	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Armenia	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Austria	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Azerbaijan	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Bahrain	High income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Belgium	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Benin	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Bolivia	Lower middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Brazil	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Bulgaria	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Burkina Faso	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Burundi	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Cambodia	Lower middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Cape Verde	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Chad	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Chile	High income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Colombia	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Costa Rica	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world

(Continued)

Table A1. (Continued).

Country	Income classification	Region	Group
Croatia	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Czech Republic	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Côte d'Ivoire	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Denmark	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Dominican Republic	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Ecuador	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Egypt	Lower middle income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
El Salvador	Lower middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Estonia	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Ethiopia	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Finland	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
France	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Georgia	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Germany	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Greece	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Guatemala	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Guinea	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Haiti	Low income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Honduras	Lower middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Hong Kong SAR, China	High income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Hungary	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Iceland	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Indonesia	Upper middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Ireland	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Islamic Republic of Iran	Upper middle income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Israel	High income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Italy	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Japan	High income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Jordan	Upper middle income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Kazakhstan	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Kuwait	High income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Kyrgyz Republic	Lower middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Lao PDR	Lower middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Latvia	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Lebanon	Upper middle income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Liberia	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Libya	Upper middle income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Lithuania	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Luxembourg	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Madagascar	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Mali	Low income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Mauritania	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Mexico	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Moldova	Lower middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Mongolia	Lower middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Montenegro	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Morocco	Lower middle income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Myanmar	Lower middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Nepal	Lower middle income	South Asia	Rest of the world
Netherlands	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Nicaragua	Lower middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Norway	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Oman	High income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Panama	High income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Paraguay	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
People's Republic of China	Upper middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Peru	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Philippines	Lower middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Poland	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Portugal	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world

(Continued)

Table A1. (Continued).

Country	Income classification	Region	Group
Qatar	High income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Republic of Korea	High income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Republic of North Macedonia	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Romania	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Russian Federation	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Saudi Arabia	High income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Senegal	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world
Serbia	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Slovakia	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Slovenia	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Spain	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Suriname	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Sweden	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Switzerland	High income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Syria	Low income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Taiwan, China	High income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Tajikistan	Low income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Thailand	Upper middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Tunisia	Lower middle income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Türkiye	Upper middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
USA	High income	North America	Rest of the world
Ukraine	Lower middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
United Arab Emirates	High income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Uruguay	High income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Uzbekistan	Lower middle income	Europe and Central Asia	Rest of the world
Venezuela	Upper middle income	Latin America and Caribbean	Rest of the world
Viet Nam	Lower middle income	East Asia and Pacific	Rest of the world
Yemen	Low income	Middle East and North Africa	Rest of the world
Zimbabwe	Lower middle income	Sub-Saharan Africa	Rest of the world