CHAPTER 12

Gender Differences in Other Countries

Chapter Highlights

- The Economic Status of the World's Women: Overview
- A Comparison of the United States to Other Economically Advanced Countries
- Challenges Facing Women in Developing Countries
- Countries of the Former Soviet Bloc
- Countries of the Middle East and North Africa

Up to this point we have focused almost entirely on the situation in the United States. Throughout, we have emphasized the influence of economic factors in determining the status of women. This is not, however, to suggest that nothing else matters, but rather that, everything being the same, economic considerations play an important role. Of course, in the real world, everything else is generally not the same. Societies differ in their political systems, economic and social policies, cultures, and religions. In this chapter, we turn to a consideration of women in other countries both to shed light on the causes of the substantial diversity in their status and to see what we can learn about institutions and policies elsewhere that have retarded or enhanced improvements in the position of women.

We begin with a broad description of the economic status of women as compared to men throughout the world, with special attention to women's labor market activity and the forces that influence it. Next, we turn to a more detailed consideration of the economically advanced countries that, in many ways, are most similar to the United States, focusing particularly on Sweden and Japan. These two cases are of particular interest because women have made great progress toward equality along a number of dimensions in Sweden and far less headway in Japan. This is followed by a brief examination of some of the issues of special concern in developing countries, in the countries of the former Soviet bloc, and in the various countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN: OVERVIEW

A number of measures are, by general agreement, regarded as useful indicators of women's economic status: women's labor force participation, the degree of occupational segregation by sex, the female–male earnings ratio, women's educational attainment as compared to men's, the fertility rate, the allocation of housework, and women's role in government as well as their standing before the law.

These indicators are of interest both because they are themselves direct indicators of women's economic status and because they are causally intertwined with one another. Their importance is underscored by the development goals set forth by the **United Nations Millennium Summit** in 2000, which explicitly include the achievement of gender equality in primary education, increases in women's paid labor market activity, and increases in women's share of political representation as key components of the goal to "promote gender equality and empower women."[1]

Labor Force Participation

Labor force participation is arguably the most important indicator of women's economic status. Although it is true that women perform a great deal of work in all economies, the total amount of time spent on household and paid work and how it is allocated between these activities differs substantially across countries. Paid work is deemed to be particularly important because it provides women with status in their own right, gives them greater power and influence in decision making within the family, and raises the family's standard of living overall.[2] This is true not only in economically advanced countries, but also in many developing countries, even though the burden of women's work in the household is particularly onerous there; water and fuel are often carried for long distances, clothes have to be washed by hand, food must be procured and prepared on a daily basis for lack of refrigeration, and many other goods and services that are generally purchased in economically advanced countries are produced at home.[3]

Table 12-1 provides figures on women's labor force participation rates and other indicators of their labor market activity by world region and level of income, and for selected countries in these regions. The labor force participation rate is the more familiar concept and the one we emphasized in previous chapters and will continue to emphasize here as well. However, for comprehensiveness, we also include two other measures. Each measure has its advantages and disadvantages in international comparisons. International differences in female labor force participation rates reflect differences across countries in women's participation in paid work, but are also influenced by differences across countries in the age range of the population that is included. We have addressed this issue by focusing on the rate for ages 15 to 64 in Table 12-1. However, international differences may still be affected by a number of other factors, including the age distribution of the population, the typical school-leaving and retirement ages, and the prevalence of market work versus family-based activities. Using the share of the labor force that is female largely mitigates these problems. However, the share measure may be influenced by the sex ratio in the general population and also provides less direct information about the extent that women are involved in paid work. The final measure we present is the ratio of women's to men's labor force participation rates; this measure addresses the problems of comparing the female participation rate across countries in much the same way that the female share of the labor force does and it has the advantage of not being affected by the sex ratio. It too has the weakness of giving less direct information about the extent of women's involvement in paid work than does the participation rate measure. The three measures track each other fairly closely and so again we focus our discussion on the labor force participation rate.

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[1] United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2007* (New York: UN, 2007).

[2] The pioneering work on this subject is Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970). For further discussion, see Esther Duflo, "Gender Equality in Development," MIT Working Paper (December 2005); Anne Mikkola and Carrie A. Miles, "Role of Gender Equality in Development: A Literature Review," Helsinki Center of Economic Research (April 2007); and UNIFEM, *Progress of the World's Women, 2005* (New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2005).

[3] Debra Ann Donahoe, "Measuring Women's Work in Developing Countries," *Population and Development Review* 25, no. 3 (September 1999): 543–76.

TABLE 12-1 Indicators of Women's Economic Status, by World Regions and Selected Countries

	Gross National Income Per Capita 2006	Female Labor Force Participation Rate (age 15–64) 1980	Female Labor Force Participation Rate (age 15–64) 2006	Ratio of Female-to-Male Labor Force Participation 2006	Female Share of Labor Force (%) 2006	Adult Illiteracy Rate (%) Female 1980	Adult Illiteracy Rate (%) Female 2006	Adult Illiteracy Rate (%) Male 1980	Adult Illiteracy Rate (%) Male 2006	Total Fertility Ra 1970	Total Fertility Ra 200
I. WORLD											
Low and Middle Income (average)	$1,997	57.4	56.7	67.2	39.2	48	28	29	15	5.4	2.7
High Income (average)	36,608	53.2	64.1	79.8	43.4	b	b	b	b	2.5	1.7
II. BY WORLD REGION AND INCOME											
Sub-Saharan Africa											
Low and Middle Income (regional average)	829	64.9	62.5	72.4	42.2	72	47	51	30	6.8	5.2
Ethiopia	170	74.1	73.5	81.1	44.9	89	77	72	50	6.8	5.3
Kenya	580	77.5	71.6	79.6	44.2	57	30	30	22	8.0	5.0
Niger	270	70.9	73.1	76.3	42.4	97	85	87	57	8.1	7.0
South Africa	5,390	60.6	49.3	60.0	37.9	25	19	22	16	5.7	2.7
East Asia and Pacific											
Low and Middle Income (regional average)	1,856	72.3	71.2	81.9	43.5	43	13	20	5	5.7	2.0
China	2,000	77.3	75.4	86.0	44.1	48	13	22	5	5.8	1.8
Indonesia	1,420	45.4	53.3	61.1	37.9	40	13	21	6	5.3	2.2
Thailand	3,050	79.8	72.2	85.0	46.7	17	9	8	5	5.3	1.8
High Income											
Australia	35,860	51.9	67.8	84.2	44.8	b	b	b	b	2.9	1.8
Japan	38,630	52.5	60.6	71.5	40.8	b	b	b	b	2.1	1.3
South Korea	17,690	45.5	54.3	70.2	40.8	11	b	3	b	4.5	1.1
South Asia											
Low and Middle Income (regional average)	768	39.7	38.1	45.2	29.3	75	55	48	30	5.9	2.8
Bangladesh	450	66.2	55.0	62.5	36.7	83	59	59	46	6.3	2.9
India	820	37.6	35.9	42.8	28.1	74	52	45	27	5.8	2.5
Pakistan	800	27.9	34.3	40.2	27.3	86	64	59	37	7.0	3.9
Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia											
Low and Middle Income (regional average)	4,815	69.3	58.0	77.9	44.7	8	4	3	b	2.7	1.6
Moldova[c]	1,080	74.7	63.0	84.7	46.8	8	b	b	b	2.6	1.2
Poland	8,210	67.7	57.3	84.0	45.7	b	b	b	b	2.2	1.3
Russia[c]	5,770	74.8	67.2	89.0	48.8	b	b	b	b	2.0	1.3
Uzbekistan[c]	610	62.3	61.0	80.4	44.6	33	b	17	b	5.7	2.4
High Income											
Czech Republic[c]	12,790	75.2	64.4	83.6	44.9	b	b	b	b	1.9	1.3
Slovenia[c]	18,660	66.9	67.0	88.6	46.0	b	b	b	b	2.2	1.3

(continued)

TABLE 12-1 Indicators of Women's Economic Status, by World Regions and Selected Countries

	Gross National Income Per Capita 2006	Female Labor Force Participation Rate (age 15–64) 1980	Female Labor Force Participation Rate (age 15–64) 2006	Ratio of Female-to-Male Labor Force Participation 2006	Female Share of Labor Force (%) 2006	Adult Illiteracy Rate (%) Female 1980	Adult Illiteracy Rate (%) Female 2006	Adult Illiteracy Rate (%) Male 1980	Adult Illiteracy Rate (%) Male 2006	Total Fertility Rate 1970	Total Fertility Rate 2006
Middle East and North Africa											
Low and Middle Income (regional average)	$2,507	20.3	31.8	40.1	28.0	72	39	44	19	6.8	2.9
Egypt	1,360	17.4	21.6	28.0	21.7	75	41	47	17	6.1	2.9
Iran	2,930	21.2	41.9	55.4	34.3	61	30	38	16	6.6	2.1
Libya	7,290	18.5	36.3	43.1	27.8	70	25	29	7	7.5	2.8
Morocco	2,160	22.4	28.7	34.4	26.1	85	60	58	34	7.0	2.4
High Income											
Israel	20,170	41.2	59.1	90.5	47.0	13	4	5	b	3.8	2.7
Kuwait	30,630	19.3	51.4	59.7	25.7	39	9	26	6	7.1	2.3
Saudi Arabia	13,980	9.2	19.1	23.2	14.2	67	31	33	13	7.3	3.4
Latin America and Caribbean											
Low and Middle Income (regional average)	4,785	35.3	56.7	68.0	40.8	23	11	18	9	5.3	2.4
Brazil	4,710	40.5	61.5	73.9	42.9	27	11	23	12	5.0	2.3
Haiti	430	63.6	58.7	69.5	41.3	73	50	66	46	5.8	3.6
Mexico	7,830	31.1	43.0	51.7	35.2	22	10	14	8	6.6	2.2
Venezuela	6,070	32.3	63.5	73.9	41.3	18	7	14	7	5.3	2.6
High Income											
Trinidad and Tobago	12,500	43.6	51.8	62.7	38.9	16	b	7	b	3.6	1.6
North America and Western Europe											
High Income											
Canada	36,650	57.2	73.2	88.7	46.1	b	b	b	b	2.3	1.5
Germany	36,810	52.0	68.2	85.9	45.1	b	b	b	b	2.0	1.3
Spain	27,340	33.1	57.8	71.6	40.6	8	b	3	b	2.8	1.4
Sweden	43,530	79.0	74.7	94.8	46.6	b	b	b	b	1.9	1.9
United Kingdom	40,560	61.8	69.5	85.0	45.4	b	b	b	b	2.4	1.9
United States	44,710	59.8	70.1	86.3	45.9	b	b	b	b	2.5	2.1

Notes: GNI per capita in low and middle-income countries is below $11,116, while GNI per capita exceeds this figure in high income countries.

Figures are for closest year available.

[a] The *total fertility rate* is defined as the number of births that a cohort of 1,000 women would have if they experienced the age-specific birthrates occurring in the current year throughout their childbearing years (see Table 10-3). Here it is divided by 1,000 to measure births per woman.

[b] Figure is 2% or less.

[c] The World Bank provides 1980 data for this country even though it did not officially exist as a separate entity at that time.

Source: World Bank, *World Development Indicators* (various years), published and online database.

Table 12-1 indicates considerable variation in labor force participation rates across regions and selected countries. The income groupings are based on World Bank classifications. Also, following the World Bank, we refer to low- and middle-income countries as **developing countries**. It should be kept in mind that there are large income differences among the countries in this group. Moreover, income is only one dimension of a country's level of economic development.[4] The data show that women's labor force participation rates in developing regions range widely, from just over 70 percent in East Asia and nearly 63 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa to 32 percent in the Middle East and North Africa. Considerable variation is also found within some of these regions. For instance, in East Asia, the female labor force participation rate for China was nearly 75 percent as compared to just 53 percent for Indonesia. And, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the female labor force participation rate was 74 percent in Ethiopia but it was just 49 percent in South Africa.

As may be seen in Table 12-1 and Table 12-2 (which focuses on *trends* in labor force participation rates for selected economically advanced countries), there is also considerable variation in women's participation rates across high income countries. While most of these countries are in Western and Northern Europe and North America, there are a number of exceptions, including some oil exporting countries in the Middle East (e.g. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia), a few countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic and Slovenia), Australia and Japan in East Asia and the Pacific, and Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean. In these countries, labor force participation figures for 2006 range from just 19 percent in Saudi Arabia, to 51 percent in Italy and Kuwait, to 70 percent in the United States, and to nearly 75 percent or more in the Nordic countries of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and in Switzerland. The region of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia comprises the countries of the former Soviet bloc and the countries that previously comprised Yugoslavia, which for four decades were dominated to a great extent by a Communist ideology. Countries in this region traditionally had relatively high female labor force participation rates, but as noted later in the chapter, female (and male) participation rates declined following the break up of the Soviet bloc and the transition to market economies. So, for example, female participation rates for the low and middle income countries in the region fell from 69 percent to 58 percent, on average. And, the female participation rate for Russia itself, historically well in excess of those in economically advanced countries, is currently reported to be just 67 percent.[5]

How do we explain this considerable diversity in labor force activity by gender across countries and, more generally, across regions? Part of the explanation is that countries or regions are in various stages of economic development, ranging from agricultural to industrial and postindustrial. As discussed in Chapter 2, one hypothesis that receives some support from the evidence is that the relationship between economic development and women's labor force participation rates tends to be U-shaped. Female labor force participation is high in the stage of subsistence agriculture, when women tend to be heavily involved as family workers, but then declines during the early stages of economic development as the nature of agricultural work changes and the locus of much production moves out of the household and into factories and offices. This stage is effectively the "bottom" of the U. One argument for the much

[4] See World Bank, "Country Classifications," Data and Statistics, World Bank web site, www.worldbank.org. Accessed January 2009.

[5] This figure stood at 75 percent in 1980 as shown in Table 12-1. One caution in looking at trends in transition countries is that survey methods may have changed. See UNIFEM, *The Story Behind the Numbers: Women and Employment in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Commonwealth of Independent States* (New York: UNIFEM, March 2006).

TABLE 12-2 Trends in Labor Force Participation Rates for Women and Men, Age 15–64, Selected Economically Advanced Countries, 1980 and 2006[6]

	Women		Men	
	1980	2006	1980	2006
Australia	52	68	86	80
Austria	50	64	84	77
Belgium	44	58	76	72
Canada	57	73	86	82
Denmark	74	74	86	82
Finland	69	74	79	77
France	55	62	82	73
Germany	52	68	83	79
Greece	40	57	82	79
Ireland	35	63	85	80
Italy	39	51	80	74
Japan	52	61	84	85
Netherlands	48	70	79	84
Norway	62	77	84	83
Portugal	53	68	87	80
South Korea	46	54	77	77
Spain	33	58	86	81
Sweden	79	75	87	79
Switzerland	51	76	90	87
United Kingdom	62	70	88	82
United States	60	70	85	81

Source: The World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, Online Database, at www.worldbank.org.

lower female labor force participation at this stage is that societal norms often work against women performing manual, factory-type work. Then, as countries become more developed and women's education and their opportunities for white-collar employment rise, women's labor force participation once again increases.[6] Consistent with this pattern, we see in Table 12-1 relatively high rates of participation in countries with economies that are predominately agricultural, such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa, but lower rates at the next stage of development, as is true of countries in Latin America. Higher rates are found once again in many of the more economically advanced countries.

As we saw in Chapter 4, the key to women's labor force participation decision is the value of market earnings (w) as compared to the value of time spent in household production (w^*). Our earlier discussion suggests that this comparison may be influenced systematically by the stage of economic development. Differences in women's

[6] Claudia Goldin, "The U-Shaped Female Labor Force Function in Economic Development and Economic History," in *Investment in Women's Human Capital*, edited by T. Paul Schultz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 61–90. For additional evidence, see Kristin Mammen and Christina Paxson, "Women's Work and Economic Development," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 141–64; and Chinhui Juhn and Manuelita Ureta, "Employment of Married Women and Economic Development: Evidence from Latin American Countries," University of Houston Working Paper (2003).

labor market activity may also be influenced by demand factors (affecting w) and supply factors (affecting w^*) that vary from place to place, as well as over time. The demand for women workers is influenced by such factors as the industrial mix of the economy and relative size of the market and nonmarket sectors, which help to determine the nature of the jobs available in the labor market. The preferences of employers for male versus female workers, perhaps reflecting deep-seated cultural ideas regarding the appropriate role of women, may also play a role. Taken together these factors influence the wages that women can earn in the labor market and the quality of the labor market opportunities available to them. On the supply-side, the value of home time is strongly influenced by fertility rates, the availability of goods and services for purchase in the market, general attitudes toward the appropriate roles for women and men, and tastes for market goods as compared to commodities mainly produced at home.

Social forces such as religion, ideology, and culture also influence women's labor market activity.[7] For instance, women's labor force participation tends to be considerably lower in countries dominated by religious faiths that particularly emphasize women's traditional roles as wives and mothers, such as in Latin America with its predominantly Catholic population and in the Middle East and North Africa, which is largely Muslim. Marxist ideology, which strongly advocates women's entry into the workforce, surely helps to explain why women's participation came to be extremely high in many of the former Soviet bloc countries as well as in China. Similarly, concern for gender equality in the Nordic countries was one of the reasons for the introduction of policies that encouraged female labor force participation such as tax schedules favorable to two-earner couples, family leave, and subsidized day care. Apart from their direct effect, these policies in turn likely influenced attitudes about women's role in the economy.

Women's economic role and status may also be related to other aspects of society, such as the practice of **polygyny** (a husband having multiple wives). Although polygyny is rare elsewhere, it is not unusual in many Sub-Saharan African countries. In fact, in seven Sub-Saharan African countries, more than 40 percent of women have husbands with one or more other wives.[8] Women's status, as measured by a number of factors, including female-to-male illiteracy rates and an index of "gender empowerment" tends to be lower where polgyny is practiced.[9] One explanation for why polygyny has persisted is that in these societies wives perform an important economic function in traditional agricultural production, thus increasing the desirability of having multiple wives. The high demand for wives in these countries also results in a high **brideprice** being paid by the future groom and his family to the bride's father and so the bride's family tends to benefit as well.[10] It seems reasonable to expect that as economic development proceeds, including the introduction of modern methods of production, and as women's educational attainment increases, polygyny will decline and women's status in these countries will correspondingly rise.

[7] See, for instance, World Bank, "Removing Social Barriers and Building Social Institutions," *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty* (Washington, DC, 2000).

[8] The term *polygamy* is often used synonymously with *polygyny*. However, polygamy includes the case where *either* a husband *or* a wife takes on multiple partners. The practice where a wife has multiple husbands is called *polyandry*, and is much rarer. Polygyny is legal in some Muslim countries as well but is now rarely practiced. Figures are from Michele Tertilt, "Polygyny, Fertility, and Savings," *Journal of Political Economy* 113, no. 6 (December 2005): 1341–68.

[9] Michele Tertilt, "Polygyny, Women's Rights, and Development," *Journal of the European Economic Association* 4, no. 2–3 (May 2006): 523–30.

[10] For instance, see Hanan G. Jacoby, "The Economics of Polygyny in Sub-Saharan Africa: Female Productivity and the Demand for Wives in Cote d'Ivoire," *Journal of Political Economy* 103, no. 5 (October 1995): 938–71. See Siwan Anderson, "The Economics of Dowry and Brideprice," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 151–74; and Tertilt, "Polygyny, Women's Rights, and Development." Shoshana Grossbard-Shectman points to the sex ratio as another factor explaining the practice of polygyny; see *On the Economics of Marriage* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), Chap. 11.

Occupations

When considering women's economic status, it is interesting to go beyond examining women's participation in the labor market, and also consider what jobs they have. When making comparisons among different countries, there are two serious difficulties. First, many do not provide detailed data on the occupational distribution of men and women, and those that do tend to use various classification schemes. Second, the degree of segregation is affected by the distribution of all workers across occupations. Thus, if, at the extreme, the majority of people in the labor force in one country were employed in a single occupation like agriculture, while in another they are distributed among a considerably larger number of occupations, the indexes of sex segregation would surely differ. The most recent comprehensive study, completed in the mid-1990s, largely overcame the first of these limitations and examined occupational sex segregation for more than 40 countries around the world using data on 75 consistent occupations. Table 12-3 shows the index of occupational segregation for the largest of these countries. As we saw in Chapter 5, the *index* is defined as the percentage of women (or men) who would have to change jobs in order for the occupational distribution of men and women to be the same. Table 12-3 indicates that occupational segregation by sex remains "very extensive in each and every country," but that the extent of segregation varies, particularly across regions.[11] For instance, the index tends to be substantially higher in countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and in "other developing countries," than in the other regions. There is, however, evidence from this study that occupational segregation has declined in recent decades, albeit not in all countries or all regions.

It appears that across all cultures and at all times, occupations have been sex segregated to a greater or lesser extent. One study, which looked at more than 200 cultures over time, found that metal working and hunting were, with few exceptions, exclusively male activities, while activities such as cooking, laundering, and spinning were predominately female. However, with the exception of certain occupations such as these, the more general pattern is that while occupations tend to be sex segregated, they vary as to whether they are dominated by men or women.[12] For instance, while in the United States women are overrepresented in the clerical sector, this is not the case in a number of countries, including Pakistan, Haiti, and Nigeria.[13] This variation suggests that occupational differences cannot be explained simply by inherent differences between women and men or by differences in their preferences or human capital investment decisions alone. Factors such as social norms, traditions, and religious beliefs also appear to play an important role. However, despite this variation, one common feature of women's employment is that it tends to be in lower-paying jobs.

[11] The study cited is Richard Anker, *Gender and Jobs: Sex Segregation of Occupations in the World* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1998). The quote is from p. 407. See especially Chap. 9 (main evidence) and Chap. 16 (summary and conclusion). For other evidence, see Mariko Lin Chang, "Growing Pains: Cross-national Variation in Sex Segregation in Sixteen Developing Countries," *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 1 (February 2004): 114–37.

[12] This conclusion is from Joyce P. Jacobsen, "Sex Segregation at Work: Trends and Predictions," *Social Science Journal* 31, no. 2 (1994): 153–69, based on data from George P. Murdock and Caterina Provost, "Factors in the Division of Labor by Sex: A Cross-Cultural Analysis," in *Ethnology* 12, no. 2 (April 1973): 203–25. See also William Rau and Robert Wazienski, "Industrialization, Female Labor Force Participation, and the Modern Division of Labor by Sex," *Industrial Relations* 38, no. 4 (October 1999): 504–21; and Anker, *Gender and Jobs*, Chaps. 8 and 16.

[13] Anker, *Gender and Jobs*.

TABLE 12-3 Occupational Segregation by Sex, Selected Countries, 1980s/1990s[a]

Region/Country/Area	Occupational Segregation Index
North America and Western Europe	
Canada	54.1
Finland	61.6
France	55.6
Germany (West)	52.3
Italy	44.9
Netherlands	56.7
Norway	57.3
Spain	56.9
Sweden	63.0
Switzerland	58.1
United Kingdom	56.7
United States	46.3
Asia/Pacific	
Australia	58.1
China	36.3
Hong Kong	49.3
India	44.6
Japan	50.2
Korea	43.2
Malaysia	48.9
New Zealand	58.2
Other Developing Countries	
Angola	65.6
Costa Rica	59.8
Ghana	71.0
Haiti	66.9
Senegal	57.3
Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia	
Bulgaria	54.1
Hungary	55.8
Poland	59.2
Middle East and North Africa	
Bahrain	62.7
Egypt	58.7
Iran	68.1
Jordan	77.6
Kuwait	73.3
Tunisia	69.5

[a] Index is computed using 75 similar occupations. Years of data vary, but the majority are from 1985 to 1991.

Source: Richard Anker, *Gender and Jobs: Sex Segregation of Occupations in the World*, 1998, Table 9.1, column 3. Copyright © International Labour Organization 1998. Reprinted by Permission of the International Labour Organization.

Earnings

The available evidence indicates that women everywhere earn less than men, although again large variations occur in the extent to which this is the case. For instance, in 2006, the female–male earnings ratio in selected economically advanced countries ranged from a low of .67 in Japan to a high of .89 in Sweden.[14] We cannot be as specific about developing countries because of problems with data availability and reliability, but considerable variability appears to be the case among these countries as well. A number of factors explain the observed variation, including differences among countries in the extent of occupational segregation, gender differences in educational attainment and labor force attachment, labor market discrimination, and government policies. In addition, general rewards for skills, such as education or labor market experience, or for employment in male-dominated occupations and industries also play a role.

[14] Data are presented later in Table 12-4.

Educational Attainment

Women's educational attainment is also important as an indicator of their economic status, in part because it influences their occupations and earnings, which are themselves indicators of women's status. Also, it allows women to make better-informed decisions about affairs in their own household, their community, and their nation. Gender differences in educational attainment are fairly small among economically advanced countries, but vary considerably across all countries, as a result of, and related to, differences in levels of affluence, as well as differences in fertility, social customs, and government policies.

Illiteracy rates provide one useful measure of educational attainment, especially in the developing world. As shown in Table 12-1 and Figure 12-1, female illiteracy rates in 2006 stood at 55 percent in South Asia, 47 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, and nearly 40 percent in the developing countries of the Middle East and North Africa. The rates for men were also high, but considerably lower than those of women in each region. For example, in South Asia the male illiteracy rate was 30 percent, and in Sub-Saharan Africa and in the developing countries of the Middle East and North Africa, the male rates were 30 and 19 percent, respectively.[15] An important factor that contributes to low levels of educational attainment for both men and women in the poorest countries is that large numbers of children do not even attend school because many of them, especially girls, are helping out at home, while others are employed (see the discussion of child labor later).

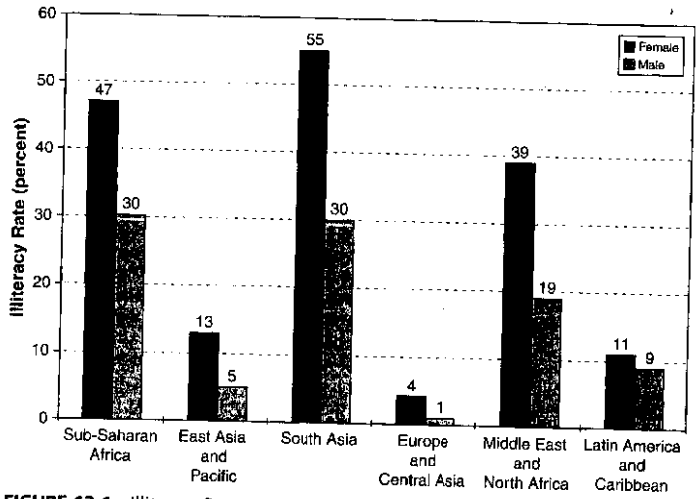

FIGURE 12-1 Illiteracy Rates, Low & Middle Income Economies, World Regions, 2006

[15] For data on average years of schooling for women relative to men in 1960 and 2000, see Robert J. Barro and Jong-Wha Lee, "International Data on Educational Attainment: Updates and Implications," *Oxford Economic Papers* 53, no. 3 (July 2001): 541–63.

Although illiteracy rates for both women and men remain high in some regions, Table 12-1 shows that they declined markedly between 1980 and 2006 across all regions and selected countries. In the developing countries of the Middle East and North Africa, female illiteracy rates fell from over 70 percent to just under 40 percent, and from over 70 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia to 47 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 55 percent in South Asia. Men's rates also declined, so there has been an absolute reduction in illiteracy for both groups. Nevertheless, the gender disparity remains. A key factor behind falling illiteracy rates is the dramatic rise in primary education, across all regions. This trend may have been hastened by the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit, which placed pressure on nations around the world to work toward the goal of universal primary education for girls and boys by the target date of 2015.

Fertility

There is also a strong relationship between fertility, educational attainment, and labor market activity. Fertility rates are an important indicator of women's economic status because with fewer children, women have greater opportunities to acquire education and engage in production for pay. Conversely, when birthrates are high, women have more difficulty remaining in school and more incentive to remain full-time homemakers. As noted in earlier chapters, however, causation runs in the other direction as well. As women invest more in education and increase their participation in market work, particularly when it is away from the household, the opportunity cost of children rises, thereby providing an incentive to have fewer children. In addition, fertility is at times related to explicit government policies, as well as to religion and ideology. For instance, in recent history, some governments have implemented policies explicitly designed to increase fertility or policies that might be expected to have such an effect. Such policies include relatively generous child allowances, paid parental leaves, and subsidized child care. Some have also introduced laws prohibiting various types of family planning, often justifying them on the grounds of religious strictures. Other countries, however, have sought to control population growth; many have done so by making birth control information available, while China went so far as to impose severe economic penalties for having more than one child. China's policy has, however, been somewhat relaxed since it was first implemented.

Given the various factors that influence fertility, it is not surprising that fertility rates differ dramatically across regions. As shown in Table 12-1 and Figure 12-2, in 2006 fertility rates were as high as 5.2 births per woman in Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by the developing countries of the Middle East and North Africa and the region of South Asia, with rates of just under 3 births per woman. In sharp contrast, the U.S. rate was 2.1, just at the replacement level, and the average rate among all high-income economies was even lower at 1.7. Table 12-1 and Figure 12-2 further show that current fertility rates in all regions are substantially lower than in past decades. Indeed, in light of these trends, Ronald Lee observed: "The question about their fertility transition is no longer 'whether,' but rather 'how far' and 'how fast.'"[16] Sub-Saharan Africa remains the one region where fertility declines are thus far quite modest. In many economically advanced countries, including the Western European nations and Japan, fertility rates have declined to well below replacement level. This trend receives further attention later in this chapter.

[16] Ronald Lee, "The Demographic Transition: Three Centuries of Fundamental Change," *Journal of Economics Perspectives* 17, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 167–90. Quote is from p. 175.

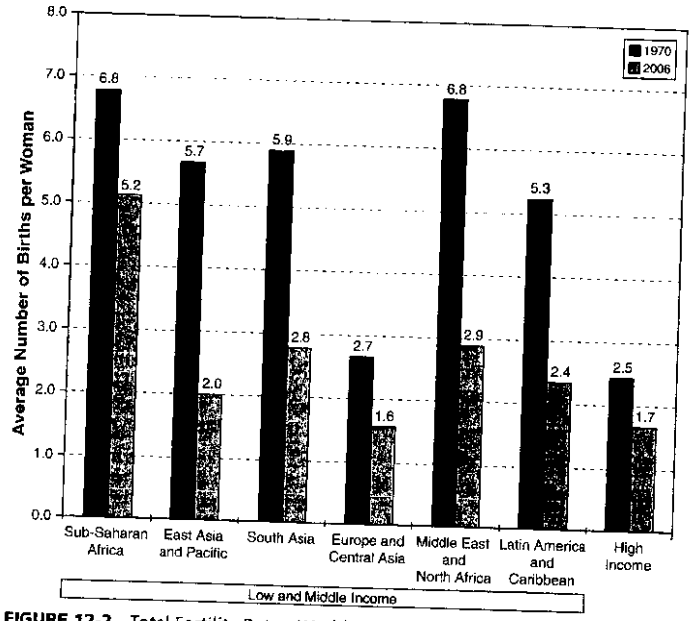

FIGURE 12-2 Total Fertility Rates, World Regions, 1970 and 2006

Housework

As discussed at some length in earlier chapters, the roles of women and men in the labor market are interrelated with their roles in the household. We found that in the United States, although women's participation in the labor market increased rapidly for some time, participation of men in housework began to increase only more recently and still lags substantially behind women's. The continued unequal division of household responsibilities between men and women potentially influences both the amount of leisure time available to them and their achievements on the job. The division of housework is also unequal in other economically advanced countries, as discussed in greater detail later. Further, it is important to recall that women in developing countries, especially in poor rural areas, often do an especially large amount of unpaid work needed for their families' subsistence, including carrying water and firewood, as well as growing agricultural products, in addition to the usual housework.

Women's Role in Government and Their Standing Before the Law

Finally, women's roles in government and their standing before the law have considerable impact on their status. Greater representation of women among public officials is expected to increase the extent to which women's issues receive attention from the government, and greater equality before the law affects, among other

things, women's right to inherit and own property, as well as their rights within the family and in case of divorce. Although women today have the right to vote in virtually all countries with representative institutions, they continue to be substantially underrepresented in public positions, especially at high levels. For instance, in 2008, there were eight female presidents and eight female prime ministers out of just under 200 countries in the world.[17] Also as of 2007, women occupied over 40 percent of all parliamentary seats in the Nordic countries, and 17 percent in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, but just 9 percent in North Africa and the Middle East.[18] Women remain underrepresented in high-level government positions in the United States as well. In 2008, only 17 percent of representatives and 16 percent of senators were women. They also continue to be underrepresented in U.S. cabinet and cabinet-level appointments, though recent administrations have included substantially more women.[19]

Similarly, women's progress toward equality before the law has been slow and uneven. In some countries, even today only men can inherit or only husbands have the right to dispose of their wives' earnings.[20] On the other hand, as of 2008, 185 countries (over 90 percent of members of the United Nations) had ratified an "international bill of rights for women" known as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), though the United States remains one notable exception.[21] At the same time, "even when legal discrimination is removed, it can take generations for practice to catch up with the revised law."[22]

Cultural Factors

The evidence presented here and later in this chapter shows that there is substantial variation in the status of women among different regions and even across countries within the same region, as measured by the indicators discussed, whether it be labor force participation, the female–male earnings ratio, educational attainment, distribution of housework, or women's role in government. This suggests that while economic factors influence the relative status of women and men, the situation is very complex, and that noneconomic factors play an important role as well. The picture is made even more complicated by the fact that women may be doing well in a country in terms of some criteria but not in terms of others.

[17] Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership at www.guide2womenleaders.com. Accessed on September 30, 2008.

[18] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments, Situation as of 30 April 2008," available at http://www.ipu.org, accessed on May 22, 2008. For discussions regarding why women's political participation may matter, see Marianne A. Ferber and Michael Brun, "Does Your Legislator's Sex Matter?" Working Paper, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2008); and Raghabendra Chattopadhyay, "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India," *Econometrica* 72, no. 5 (September 2005): 1409–43.

[19] For more details, go to the Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, www.cawp.rutgers.edu. Accessed on January 17, 2009.

[20] Ester Boserup, "Obstacles to Advancement of Women During Development," in *Investments in Women's Human Capital*, edited by T. Paul Schultz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 51–60; and Diane Lee-Smith and Catalina Hinchey Trujillo, "Unequal Rights: Women and Property," in *Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice*, edited by Jan S. Jacquette and Gale Summerfield (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 159–72.

[21] United Nations at www.un.org.

[22] United Nations, *Human Development Report 1995*, pp. 42–43. In addition, as Diane Elson points out, legal equality often means little for poor rural women as long as they are concentrated in the informal sector, or in female ghettoes of the formal sector, and intrahousehold distribution is not necessarily affected by these changes. See her "Introduction" in *Male Bias in the Development Process* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 1–28.

An example of the importance of noneconomic or cultural factors that affect women's status in a number of countries, including China, India, South Korea, and Taiwan, is the long-standing cultural preference for sons, which has resulted in bias against daughters and women in general. This preference is reflected in the very high **sex ratio**—the ratio of men to women—in these countries as well as by the sizable estimates of what Nobel laureate Amartya Sen has referred to as **missing women**.[23]

Some evidence indicates that in regions where women work for pay, there is a higher ratio of women to men. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa the ratio of women's economic activity to men's is high and the ratio of men to women in the population is low while in southern Asia (including India), just the opposite is observed.[24] This pattern of findings suggests that girls are more highly valued and better treated—as reflected by higher survival rates—when girls and women make a substantial economic contribution outside the home. It is likely that girls are more highly valued when they are expected to become economically active, in part because they are viewed as potential providers of financial assistance to parents in old age. In addition, they may be seen as a source of a "bride-price" (where the bride's family receives payment upon marriage) rather than as a financial drain on the family, as in the case where the bride's family must pay a **dowry**.[25]

China is a notable exception to the pattern described earlier, with its high female activity ratio, as shown in Table 12-1, but still a high sex ratio. This situation illustrates that how girls fare relative to boys also likely depends on a number of historical and cultural factors. For instance, in China, it has long been the obligation of sons, not daughters, to support their parents in their old age, which makes sons more valuable.

An interesting line of research also suggests that outcomes for girls improve when mothers have more resources because mothers tend to devote more resources to girls, while fathers tend to favor sons. Further, mounting evidence indicates that mothers tend to spend a larger share of their resources on children, whether boys or girls, than do fathers.[26] Taken together, these findings suggest that advances in women's economic status, as measured by higher rates of labor force participation, better jobs, and greater educational attainment, should benefit children generally, as well as

[23] Amartya Sen, "More than 100 Million Women Are Missing," *The New York Review of Books* 37, no. 20 (December 1990): 61–66. For recent evidence, see Stephan Klasen and Claudia Wink, "Missing Women: Revisiting the Debate," *Feminist Economics* 9, no. 2–3 (July–November 2003): 263–99. Even in the United States, some slight preference for sons is evident, as demonstrated by the sex-ratios for third-born children in U.S. families of Chinese, Korean, and Indian descents. See Douglas Almond and Lena Edlund, "Son-Biased Sex Ratios in the 2000 United States Census," *PNAS* 105, no. 15 (April 15, 2008): 5681–82. For further evidence on sex preference in the United States, see Shelly Lundberg, "Sons, Daughters, and Parental Behavior," *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 21, no. 3 (2005): 340–56.

[24] Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *Hunger and Public Action* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), Chap. 4. See also Marimen and Paxson, "Women's Work and Economic Development"; and Marianne A. Ferber and Helen M. Berg, "Labor Force Participation of Women and the Sex Ratio: A Cross-Country Analysis," *Review of Social Economy* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 2–19; and Klasen and Wink, "Missing Women."

[25] Anderson, "The Economics of Dowry and Brideprice."

[26] For example, see Duncan Thomas, "Intra-Household Resource Allocation: An Inferential Approach," *Journal of Human Resources* 25, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 635–64; Duncan Thomas, "Like Father, Like Son: Like Mother, Like Daughter: Parental Resources and Child Height," *Journal of Human Resources* 29, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 950–88; Shelly J. Lundberg, Robert A. Pollak, and Terence J. Wales, "Do Husbands and Wives Pool Their Resources? Evidence from the U.K. Child Benefit," *Journal of Human Resources* 32, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 463–80; and Bina Agarwal, " 'Bargaining' and Gender Relations: Within and Beyond the Household," *Feminist Economics* 3, no. 1 (March 1997): 1–51. Grandmothers behave similarly to mothers; see Esther Duflo, "Grandmothers and Granddaughters: Old age Pensions and Intra-Household Allocations in South Africa," *World Bank Economic Review* 17, no. 1 (2003): 1–25.

reduce the considerable imbalance in the allocation of resources to girls and boys in countries that have traditionally favored boys.

In spite of wide cultural differences, women from around the world have joined together in recent decades in international efforts to improve women's status. In 1995, women from nearly 190 countries attended the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and put together a "Plan for Action" that focused on education as a key to women's progress. In addition, they addressed a broad range of other issues, from violence against women to economic development. At follow-up United Nations conferences called "Beijing Plus Five" in 2000 and "Beijing Plus Ten" in 2005, women representatives again came together to take stock of the progress made since 1995, as well as to press for additional rights and to reaffirm each government's commitment to change. Further, in 2000, at the U.N. Millennium Summit, world leaders set forth eight development goals, including the goal of universal primary education, with detailed targets to be accomplished by specified dates. Evidence suggests that these international efforts are having some success in placing pressure on countries to work toward making at least some of the suggested changes, but progress across regions has been uneven.[27]

A COMPARISON OF THE UNITED STATES TO OTHER ECONOMICALLY ADVANCED COUNTRIES

The same trends that have occurred in the United States since the 1970s—women's rising labor force participation, improvements in the female–male wage ratio, a modest reallocation of housework between men and women, declining marriage rates, rising rates of divorce, increased cohabitation, and more births to unmarried mothers—have also occurred in other economically advanced countries, although to varying degrees. Explanations for these trends are similar to those offered for the United States in earlier chapters. However, other factors, including differences in government **family policies** (e.g., the availability and amount of family leave and whether it is with pay, and the availability of publicly funded day care), the design of government tax policy, and variations in wage structures, are particularly important in explaining cross-country differences in outcomes.[28]

This section provides some comparisons of policies relevant to the status of women and the well-being of their families among economically advanced countries. It then goes on to examine labor market outcomes and changes in the division of housework, as well as some demographic trends, in greater detail. Special attention is paid to Sweden and Japan because Sweden, like other Nordic countries, has made notable progress toward greater equality between men and women in the home as well as in the labor market, while Japan has experienced much slower change.

Beginning in the 1960s, Sweden instituted a comprehensive set of policies to achieve the goal of equal treatment of women and men.[29] Efforts were made to discourage

[27] World Bank, *Millennium Development Report*. See also Irene Tinker, "Empowerment Just Happened: The Unexpected Expansion of Women's Organizations," in *Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice*, edited by Jane S. Jacquette and Gale Summerfield (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 268–302.

[28] For overviews, see OECD, "Female Labour Force Participation: Past Trends and Main Determinants in OECD Countries," *Economic Policy Reforms: Going for Growth* (Paris: OECD, 2005), Chapter 6; Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "Women's Work and Wages," in *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, 2nd edition, edited by Steven N. Durlauf and Lawrence E. Blume (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 762–72; and European Commission, *Report on Equality Between Women and Men—2008* (Luxembourg: EU, 2008).

[29] See, for instance, Asa Lundqvist and Christine Roman, "Construction of Swedish Family Policy, 1930–2000," *Journal of Family History* 33, no. 2 (2008): 216–36; and Urban Lundberg and Klas Amark, "Social Rights and Social Security: The Swedish Welfare State, 1900–2000," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 26, no. 3 (September 2001): 157–76.

gender-based stereotypes at all levels of the educational system. All gender differences in public aid were removed. Legislation was introduced to make marriage an equal partnership; a husband is no longer required to support his wife. Full participation of women and men in the labor market became the established goal. To encourage married women to enter the labor force, the joint income tax for spouses was eliminated (except for nonwage income) and replaced by a system of individual taxation. As discussed in Chapter 11, a joint income tax can have a considerable negative impact on work incentives, especially for wives, who are often perceived to be secondary workers. This is less true of individual taxation because the applicable marginal tax rate a married woman faces upon entering the labor market is lower than the rate she would have to pay as the second earner.[30]

As discussed in Chapter 7, **antidiscrimination legislation** is also expected to affect labor market outcomes. The United States was a leader in this regard, adopting major antidiscrimination legislation in the early 1960s. Beginning in the 1970s, other economically-advanced countries began to enact similar measures aimed at ensuring women's rights to equal opportunity in employment. Both Sweden and Japan were relative late-comers. Sweden did not pass antidiscrimination laws until 1980 and 1992. Japan did not enact any legislation until 1985 and that legislation, which was extremely weak, was not strengthened until 1997 and 2006.[31] On the other hand, the United States has lagged in mandating **family leave**. Only in 1993 did the United States mandate that firms must provide workers with unpaid family leave of 12 weeks. All other economically advanced countries have for quite some time provided or mandated paid leave for mothers or for both parents. Indeed, Sweden began offering paid maternity leave to all mothers in the mid 1950s and was the first to extend such leave to fathers in 1974.[32] Its policy is among the most generous: It provides 12 months of paid leave that may be taken by either parent at 80 percent replacement pay, and an additional 3 months with a flat-rate payment. Workers are guaranteed their jobs when they return and must be offered the option of working part time (6 hours per day) until the youngest child is age 8. Even Japan's policy is somewhat more generous than that of the United States. Mothers are entitled to 14 weeks leave at 60 percent replacement pay and either parent may take unpaid leave for up to a year.[33]

Many economically advanced countries provide family-friendly policies that extend well beyond parental leave, and the prevalence of such policies has increased considerably in recent years. Such policies include extended part-time work or the option of switching to a flexible schedule after the birth of a child, to care for aged relatives, or to accommodate training and education. For instance, the United Kingdom and New Zealand recently adopted policies whereby parents of pre-school age children have the "right to ask" their employer for flexible or reduced hours. Parents do not have to offer a specific justification such as a child's illness, and employers have the right to say no if the change is not feasible on business grounds. This type of policy provides an

[30] See Diane Sainsbury, "Taxation, Family Responsibilities, and Employment," in *Gender and Welfare State Regimes*, edited by Diane Sainsbury (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 185–210.

[31] Sweden's 1992 Equal Opportunity Act goes further than legislation than in many other countries, however, requiring that employers try to obtain a well-balanced sex distribution in various jobs and must make it easier for workers to combine work and family. For further discussion of policies in Japan and the Nordic countries, see Helina Melkas and Richard Anker, *Towards Gender Equity in Japanese and Nordic Labour Markets: A Tale of Two Paths* (Geneva: ILO, 2003); and Nabanita Datta Gupta, Nina Smith, and Mette Verner, "The Impact of Nordic Countries' Family Friendly Policies on Employment, Wages, and Children," *Review of Economics of the Household* 6, no. 1 (March 2008): 65–89.

[32] The evolution of this policy is described in Britta Hoem and Jan M. Hoem, "Sweden's Family Policies and Roller-Coaster Fertility," *Journal of Population Problems* 52, no. 3–4 (November 1996): 1–22.

[33] Janet C. Gornick and Marcia K. Meyers, *Families That Work* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), Chap. 5; and OECD, *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life, A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries* (Paris: OECD, 2007).

intermediate solution between the current situation in the United States, where employees must remain cautious about even asking, and a mandate requiring employers to make accommodations.[34]

As we noted in Chapter 11, policies designed to help workers better balance work and family can be quite important to women in maintaining their attachment to the labor force and to their current firm. Indeed, relatively short leaves have been found to increase women's labor force attachment and wages. However, the situation may be more ambiguous for longer leaves. Such leaves (more than 3 months in one study) were found to have a negative effect on women's wages.[35] Moreover, because leaves tend to be disproportionately taken by mothers, even when available to both parents, they may reinforce traditional gender roles in the family and thus help to perpetuate differences in labor market outcomes between men and women. Related policies, such as the option of part-time work or the opportunity to adopt a more flexible work schedule, pose a similar set of concerns. As discussed in Chapter 9, part-time work frequently provides less opportunity for upward mobility than full-time employment. Consistent with this, it has been suggested that the extensive family policies adopted in Sweden and other Nordic countries may have had the unintended consequence of segmenting women into "female" jobs, thereby creating a "glass ceiling" for women workers.[36]

While only a few countries provide subsidized child care, some of those that do have committed a large amount of resources for this purpose. For instance, in Sweden, heavily subsidized day care is available for nearly half of children ages 1 to 2, and more than four-fifths of children ages 3 to 6. France subsidizes child care even more generously. There, all children ages 3 to 5 are eligible for free preschool, and virtually all of them do attend even if their mother is not employed. In addition, 14 percent of children ages 0 to 2 are in day care. By way of contrast, in Germany, out-of-home care for children ages 0 to 2 is rare, though 90 percent of children ages 3 to 5 are in preschool.[37]

Wage-setting institutions also differ considerably across countries. These differences affect wage structures and, hence, wage inequality and the gender earnings ratio. As discussed in Chapter 8 in our consideration of trends in the gender wage gap, *wage structure* refers to the relative wages paid for various labor market qualifications, such as the proficiency of an experienced worker compared to a new hire, or a college graduate compared to someone who finished only high school. International differences in wage-setting institutions and wage inequality are considerable, especially between the United States and the other economically advanced nations. This makes international differences in wage-setting institutions a particularly important factor in understanding international differences in the gender wage gap. In many of the economically advanced countries, wages are determined in a highly centralized way, with a strong role for unions and government in wage-setting. Wages in the union sector are determined by collective bargaining, and, where unions are strong, collective bargaining agreements are often extended to nonunion workers or may cause nonunion firms to voluntarily imitate union pay structures.[38] Unions tend to raise the wages of less-skilled (low-wage) workers and lead to a more compressed wage structure. As a relatively low-wage group in all countries, women disproportionately benefit from wage policies that "bring up the bottom" of the wage distribution. Alternatively, the wage-setting process can be quite decentralized, as in the United States, where only a small proportion of the labor force belongs to labor unions, and wages are largely determined by employers. In 2003, only 14 percent of workers in the United States were covered by collective bargaining agreements as compared with rates of 77 to 95 percent in the Scandinavian countries, which were particularly heavily unionized. Even Britain, one of the least unionized apart from the United States, had a unionization rate of 35 percent. Thus, in the United States, with its more dispersed wage distribution, less-skilled (low-wage) workers tend to receive lower relative pay than in most other economically advanced countries.[39] Moreover, since women are a relatively low-wage group in the United States and do not have their wages boosted by union wage scales, this tends to widen the gender wage gap in the United States relative to other economically advanced countries.

Most economically advanced countries provide child benefits or a child allowance to families based on the number of children, without regard to income. This is not the case in the United States. Nonetheless, the United States does provide child benefits through the tax system via the personal exemption, and tax credits including the Child Tax Credit, Dependent Care Tax Credit, and the Earned Income Tax Credit. The precise amount received by the family depends on the number of children in the family, whether or not the parent or parents are employed, and the family's federal income tax bracket. While the approach in the United States is without doubt more complex, one recent study finds that, all told, the value of the subsidy received by children in the United States is on par with the subsidy provided in Sweden.[40] Finally, unlike the United States, most of the other economically advanced countries offer either national health insurance or a national health care system. Such programs reduce the cost of rearing children and potentially improve the health and, thus, the productivity of present as well as future workers.

Labor Force Participation

Table 12-2 shows that between 1980 and 2006 women's labor force participation increased appreciably, while men's participation decreased somewhat, in all of the economically advanced countries included in the table. Nevertheless, there are substantial cross-country differences, especially in women's participation rates. In 2006 participation rates were highest in Sweden and the other Nordic countries and in Switzerland, with rates of nearly 75 percent or more, followed closely by the United States at 70 percent.[41] Labor force participation rates were somewhat lower in countries such as Japan, Germany, and Austria, and considerably lower in South Korea and in Southern Europe,

[34] For details on these policies, see OECD, *Babies and Bosses*. For comparisons with the United States and recommendations, see Ariane Hegeisch and Janet C. Gornick, *Statutory Routes to Workplace Flexibility in Cross-National Perspective* (Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2008).
[35] Christopher J. Ruhm, "The Economic Consequences of Parental Leave Mandates: Lessons from Europe," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 113, no. 1 (1998): 285–317. Another study that looked at 20 advanced economies found that while gender earnings disparities appeared to be less pronounced in countries with developed family policies, this was entirely due to the more compressed wage structures of these "welfare states" rather than to the prevailing family policies; see, Hadas Mandel and Moshe Semyonov, "Family Policies, Wage Structures, and Gender Gaps: Sources of Earnings Inequality in 20 Countries," *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 6 (December 2005): 949–67. The impact of wage structures is considered in greater detail later.
[36] Gupta et al., "The Impact of Nordic Countries' Family Friendly Policies."
[37] OECD, *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care* (2006), Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

[38] See, for instance, Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "International Differences in Male Wage Inequality: Institutions Versus Market Forces," *Journal of Political Economy* 104, no. 4 (August 1996): 791–837.
[39] Figures are from Jelle Visser, "Union Membership Statistics in 24 Countries," *Monthly Labor Review* 129, no. 1 (January 2006): 3–49. For discussion, see Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, *At Home and Abroad: U.S. Labor Market Performance in International Perspective* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); and Blau and Kahn, "International Differences in Male Wage Inequality."
[40] Nancy Folbre, *Valuing Children: Rethinking the Economics of the Family* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 159.
[41] Interestingly, Sweden was hardly a leader in this respect in earlier days; married women there were not even granted the legal right to enter into work contracts or to control their own earnings until 1920, as discussed in Christina Jonung and Inga Persson, "Combining Market Work and Family," in *Population, Economy and Welfare in Sweden*, edited by Tommy Bengtsson (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1994), pp. 37–64. For further discussion of cross-country differences, see Dora L. Costa, "From Mill Town to Board Room: The Rise of Women's Paid Labor," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 101–22.

including Greece, Spain, and especially Italy, where the rate was only 51 percent. Part of the reason for the particularly low rates in Southern Europe may be their emphasis on the traditional family, related to their religious orientation, which would be expected to reduce women's labor force participation.

The high labor force participation rate in Sweden is not surprising in view of all their policies intended to encourage women to enter and remain in the labor force.[42] At the same time, it should be noted that women at home caring for young children, who are covered by Sweden's generous parental leave policies, are considered to be in the labor force. Their inclusion is not unique to Sweden; it is a general reporting practice to include workers on paid leave in labor force statistics. One recent study shows that when the participation rate for Sweden is recalculated excluding these workers, there is a "marked dipping" in women's participation rates during the peak childbearing years.[43] Nonetheless, the official labor force participation rate does provide a useful measure of women's attachment to the labor force because the leave policies give mothers the right to return to their former job and to retain their seniority.

As noted earlier, Japan's female participation rate is about average for the countries included in Table 12-2. Interestingly, one long-standing difference in the nature of employment in Japan relative to the United States and Sweden is quickly disappearing. As recently as 1990, 17 percent of employed women in Japan were unpaid workers in a family enterprise, but that figure steadily decreased to 8 percent by 2007. In contrast, in both 1990 and 2007, fewer than 1 percent of employed women in the United States and Sweden were unpaid family workers.[44] The drawback to this type of employment is that these women earn no independent income that they personally control.

Nevertheless, lifetime participation patterns of women in Japan continue to differ considerably from those of high-participation countries such as Sweden and the United States. As evident in Figure 12-3, the pattern is M-shaped in Japan; labor force participation decreases during the childbearing years but increases to a second peak later. As we saw in Chapter 4, this pattern also prevailed in the United States between World War II and the early 1970s. Today, however, there is an inverted U pattern in the United States and especially in Nordic countries including Sweden; labor force participation rises during the early years as women complete their education, reaches a plateau, and eventually declines as retirement age approaches. This is similar to the male pattern and denotes a higher level of labor force attachment. Some researchers suggest that Japan is merely lagging behind these other countries and will eventually "catch up." It may be, however, that for historical and cultural reasons, the same factors that were operative in the United States and Sweden are not operative in Japan, so that extrapolation based on their experience may be inappropriate.[45] In addition, as we will see, the nature of women's employment in Japan differs in some important respects. Notably, far fewer women have opportunities for career advancement within the firms where they are employed.

[42] Finland and Denmark follow similar policies, with correspondingly high rates of labor force participation. For further discussion, see OECD, "Female Labour Force Participation."
[43] The general treatment of paid family leave in labor force statistics, as well as the case of Sweden are discussed in Grant Johnston, "Women's Participation in the Labour Force," New Zealand Treasury Working Paper 05/06 (June 2005).
[44] Data are computed from the International Labour Organization, *Yearbook of Labour Statistics* (Geneva: ILO, 2006). For a discussion of women's labor force participation in Japan, see Yoshi-Fumi Nakata and Ryoji Takehiro, "Employment and Wages of Female Japanese Workers: Past, Present, and Future," *Industrial Relations* 41, no. 4 (October 2002): 521–47; and Sawako Shirahase, "Women's Economic Status and Fertility: Japan in Cross-National Perspective," in *The Political Economy of Low Fertility: Japan in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Frances McCall Rosenbluth (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), Chapter 2.
[45] Mary Brinton, *Women and the Economic Miracle: Gender and Work in Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 43.

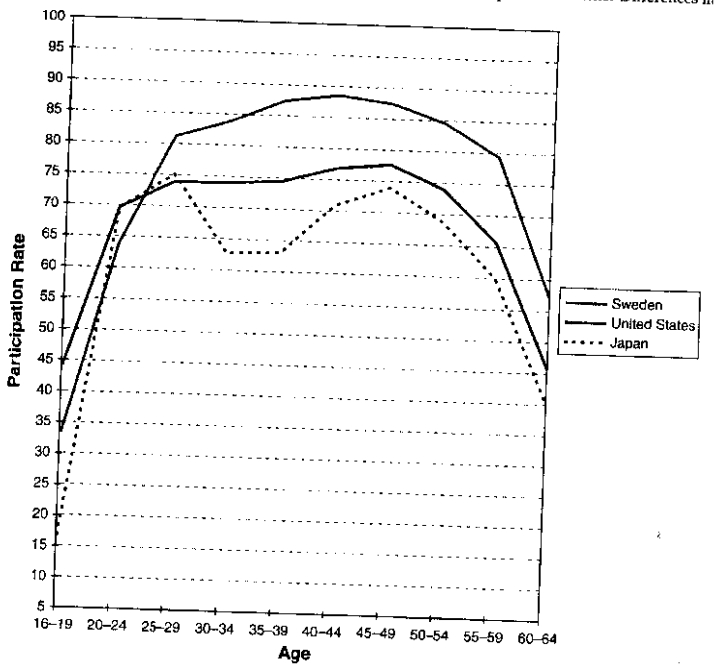

FIGURE 12-3 Labor Force Participation Rates of Women by Age, Selected Countries, 2005

Occupations

As previously noted, Table 12-3 shows that considerable sex segregation by occupation continues in the more economically advanced countries. Although noticeable progress is being made by young college-educated workers, sex segregation appears to be more firmly entrenched for less-educated workers. These findings, which suggest divergent trends in sex segregation by level of education in a number of economically advanced countries, mirror recent trends for the United States described earlier in Chapter 5.[46]

Looking at specific countries, one might expect the index of segregation for Sweden to be relatively low because their policies quite successfully raised not only women's labor force participation but also increased their attachment to the labor force. In fact, Sweden's index is the highest of the economically advanced countries included in the table and higher than that for the United States. Women in Sweden continue to be disproportionately employed in traditionally female clerical and white-collar jobs, most notably in the government sector, and in health care, education, and child care.

[46] OECD, "Women at Work: Who Are They and How Are They Faring?" *OECD Employment Outlook* (2002).

Nevertheless, while considerable sex segregation continues in Sweden, evidence suggests that there has been a considerable decline since the 1970s.[47] As we have seen, there was also a substantial decline in segregation in the United States during this period. The experience of both Sweden and the United States stands in marked contrast to that of Japan, where the index has changed very little.

Part of the explanation for the relatively high degree of sex segregation in Sweden is that women are well paid in predominantly female occupations, reducing their incentive to enter predominantly male occupations. In addition, for a long time Sweden put far more emphasis on policies that encourage women to enter the labor market than on opening up new careers for them.[48] As discussed earlier, Sweden and other Scandinavian countries have relatively long parental leaves and permit long stretches of part-time work after childbirth, which tend to reinforce occupational segregation. The counter argument is that working part time is likely to be less disruptive to maintaining and accumulating market skills than dropping out entirely.

Equally surprising as the high index of occupational segregation by sex in Sweden is the low index for Japan. Part of the explanation is that a larger share of the labor force in Japan is still employed in agriculture and blue-collar jobs, which also happen to be occupations that employ a relatively large percentage of women in that country. It should also be noted that the low representation of women in white-collar positions in Japan is a disadvantage for them because many of these jobs are among the most prestigious and well paid and are also the most likely to be associated with permanent employment.[49]

The low priority placed on gender equality in Japan is well illustrated by the fact that the government did not promulgate an equal opportunity employment law until 1985, when it became more acceptable to business as a consequence of internal labor shortages that made the hiring of women advantageous, and when external forces, including pressure from the United Nations, became difficult to ignore. Even then, employers were asked only to comply voluntarily and the government was not given the right to impose sanctions or financial penalties. Legislation passed subsequently in 1997 and 2006 considerably strengthened the earlier legislation by explicitly prohibiting discrimination in hiring, training, and promotion, imposing stricter rules regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, and providing greater protections for women against pregnancy-related discrimination.[50]

Evidence indicates that since the passage of the 1985 legislation a much larger fraction of women are enrolled in college, but these changes are not yet being directly translated into increased gender equality in the workplace.[51] Considerable segregation remains *within* broad occupational categories as women continue to be largely assigned to lower-status, mommy-track type of positions and only rarely offered "core employment," which not only provides job security but also is typically associated with regular wage increases and steady promotions. In fact, one recent Japanese government survey

[47] Melkas and Anker, *Towards Gender Equity in Japanese and Nordic Labour Markets*.
[48] See, for instance, Gupta et al., "The Impact of Nordic Countries' Family Friendly Policies."
[49] Anker, *Gender and Jobs*, Chap. 9; Marcus E. Rebick, *The Japanese Employment System: Adapting to a New Economic Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Mary C. Brinton, "Gendered Offices: A Comparative-Historical Examination of Clerical Work in Japan and the U.S.," in *The Political Economy of Low Fertility: Japan in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Frances McCall Rosenbluth (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).
[50] The details of the legislation are described in Hiroya Nakakubo, " 'Phase III' of the Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Act," *Japanese Labor Review* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 9–19.
[51] Linda N. Edwards and Margaret K. Pasquale, "Women's Higher Education in Japan: Family Background, Economic Factors, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Law," *Journal of the Japanese and International Economies* 17, no. 1 (2003): 1–32.

of more than 200 firms found that women held only a little over 2 percent of all core employment positions.[52]

Some part of the gender inequality in Japan's multiple-track system may be caused by the decision of many women themselves to remain in the less demanding tracks in anticipation of having a family. This choice would be understandable because, in Japan, core employment positions are tailored for men in traditional families, who do extremely little housework. These positions require a degree of commitment that would be hard for women with families to manage. Thus, women are, in effect, faced with the choice of family or career. At the same time, husbands' employment in these positions means that they would find it difficult to share in household tasks and child care, even if they wanted to do so.

Looking toward the future, Japanese firms are likely to experience considerable pressure to modify the multiple-track system, as a result of both the revised EEO law and Japan's low fertility rate. These changes are expected to increase employment opportunities for women workers and to spur the creation and expansion of policies and practices that enable employed women to combine marriage and family. These developments might also alter the long-standing custom that wives of eldest sons are responsible for their in-laws, a duty which adds considerably to their caregiving responsibilities.[53]

The Gender Wage Gap

Table 12-4 shows the ratio of women's to men's earnings in nonagricultural employment for the period from 1970 to 2006 in a number of economically advanced countries. It offers a useful overview, although a number of qualifications must be borne in mind. Some countries provide data for hourly earnings while others provide figures for weekly earnings as in the case of the United States, or monthly earnings as in the case of Japan. Because weekly and monthly earnings are influenced by the number of hours and days worked (even among full-time workers), the gender earnings differential is likely to be larger than if hourly wages were compared. Also, data for the United States are reported for full-time workers, but that is not the case for all countries. The data are also not precisely comparable in other ways. In some cases they are for subgroups of workers such as manufacturing workers in Germany. There are also differences in the definition of wages; they may or may not include income in kind or family allowances and so on. Finally, in the 1990s, some substantial changes were made in several earnings series, notably those for France, Japan, and Switzerland. In such cases, sharp "jumps" in the data are not due to changes in economic behavior, but rather to changes in how the data are measured. As a result, caution must be exercised in interpreting wage *trends* within these countries.

As shown in the table, in all the selected countries women continue to be paid less than men, although the ratio of women's to men's earnings has risen since at least 1970 in all cases. Interestingly, however, the most rapid increases did not occur at the same time, nor did the ratios reach the same level in each of these countries.[54] Instead, there have been a variety of patterns, including intermittent increases, interrupted by periods of stagnation, and even temporary reversals. As we saw in Chapter 5, the ratio of usual

[52] Figure is from "Japanese Women Push at the Door of Change," *The Financial Times* (London), April 19, 2002, p. 13. See also, Melkas and Anker, *Towards Gender Equity in Japanese and Nordic Labour Markets*; Joyce Gelb, "The Equal Employment Opportunity Law: A Decade of Change for Japanese Women," *Law and Policy*, 22 no. 3 & 4 (October 2000): 385–407; and Anthony Faiola, "Japanese Working Women Still Serve the Tea; Despite Hopes for Change as Their Ranks Have Grown, Discrimination Persists," *Washington Post* (March 2, 2007).
[53] For a discussion of low fertility and late marriage, see Robert D. Retherford, Naohiro Ogawa, and Rikiya Matsukura, "Late Marriage and Less Marriage in Japan," *Population and Development Review* 27, no. 1 (March 2001): 65–102. See also, Rosenbluth, ed. *The Political Economy of Japan's Low Fertility*.
[54] See also, OECD, "Women at Work," pp. 96–100.

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006
Australia	0.65	0.86	0.88	0.88	0.86
Finland	0.70	0.75	0.77	0.79	0.80
France	0.78	0.79	0.81	0.74[a]	0.74
Denmark	0.74	0.86	0.85	0.83	0.85
Germany	0.69	0.72	0.73	0.74	0.74
Japan	0.51	0.54	0.50	0.65[a]	0.67
Netherlands	0.71	0.78	0.78	0.78	0.82
New Zealand	0.72	0.77	0.81	0.81	0.82
Norway	0.75	0.82	0.86	0.85	0.87
Sweden	0.82	0.90	0.89	0.88	0.89
Switzerland	0.66	0.68	0.68	0.75[a]	0.76
United Kingdom	0.60	0.70	0.70	0.73	0.76
United States	0.62	0.64	0.72	0.76	0.81

Notes: For Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, figures for 1990 and before are for the manufacturing sector. For Germany, figures prior to 2000 are for West Germany. Data for Germany for 2000 and on are for the manufacturing sector.

[a] Series is not continuous. A new series starts for France, Japan, and Switzerland in 2000.

Source: Figures are calculated from International Labour Organization, LABORSTA Internet database, http://laborsta.ilo.org. Accessed on September 26, 2008.

median weekly earnings of full-time workers in the United States increased substantially from .64 in 1980 to .77 in 1993. For several years afterwards the ratio fell, but by 1999 it had rebounded to .77 and, by 2006, the ratio climbed to .81.

In the case of Sweden, on the other hand, most of the gains had occurred by the early 1980s, and the ratio has remained virtually unchanged since then at just under .90, which is among the highest for any country. In a number of other countries, including the United Kingdom, the ratio also increased substantially early on, then stagnated for some time, only to show recent evidence of a renewed increase. As may be seen in the table, the gender earnings ratio in the United Kingdom rose from .70 in 1990 to .76 in 2006.

In Australia, the ratio increased sharply from 1970 to 1980, as a result of the introduction of comparable worth (see the inset on Australia), and has fluctuated between .86 and .88 since 1990. The earnings ratio in Japan, historically lower than in other economically advanced countries, actually declined from .54 in 1980 to .50 in 1990 based on a comparable series for those years. However, a newly available series, which cannot be directly compared with the earlier one, indicates that the gender wage ratio in Japan increased from .65 in 2000 to .67 in 2006, suggestive of a recent upward trend.

In sum, there is evidence for the countries examined that women's wages are once again rising relative to those of men. It is difficult to sort out the reasons for the trends in these series, and they need not be the same for all countries. It is, however, likely that changing wage structures within countries, the degree of enforcement of antidiscrimination laws,[55] and changes in the relative qualifications of women workers play a greater or lesser role.

[55] An interesting finding in this regard is that the ratification by countries of two International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions supporting equal treatment of men and women has been found to have a strong and significant effect reducing the "unexplained" gender wage gap; see Doris Weichselbaumer and Rudolf Winter-Ebmer, "The Effects of Competition and Equal Treatment Laws on Gender Wage Differentials," *Economic Policy* 22, no. 50 (April 2007): 235–87. For evidence of a "glass ceiling" in 10 European Union countries, see Wiji Arulampalam, Alison L. Booth, and Mark L. Bryan, "Is There a Glass Ceiling over Europe? Exploring the Gender Pay Gap Across the Wages Distribution," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 60, no. 2 (November 2006): 163–86.

Another issue that deserves attention is the relationship between the female–male earnings ratio and occupational segregation by sex. On the one hand, for the reasons discussed in Chapter 7, one might expect a negative relationship; the higher the degree of segregation, the lower the female–male earnings ratio. On the other hand, if earnings for women are relatively high in women's fields, they will have less incentive to enter men's occupations so that one could observe both a high degree of segregation and a relatively high earnings ratio. This might occur in countries with strong union policies that serve to compress the overall wage structure, as is the case in Sweden, or where comparable worth policies have been adopted, as is the case in Australia.

It is also worthy of note that the earnings ratio in the United States currently falls in the middle of the selected countries and, in earlier years, lagged considerably behind most of the countries. One might expect the United States to have ranked close to the top throughout this period because the United States was among the first to promulgate antidiscrimination laws, beginning in the early 1960s, and U.S. women tend to have similar, if not higher, levels of human capital relative to men as compared to women in these other countries. The answer to this puzzle lies in the fact that the size of the gender gap is determined not only by differences across countries in women's qualifications and in the extent of discrimination against them but also by international differences in wage structure or the returns that the labor market sets for skills and employment in higher-wage, predominantly-male occupations and industries.[56] Because women tend to have less experience than men, on average, and to be concentrated in low-wage "female" sectors, the gender wage gap will be larger when the return to experience or the reward to employment in higher-wage, predominantly-male occupations and industries is especially large. As we noted earlier in this section, international differences in wage-setting institutions and wage structure are substantial, especially between the United States and the other economically advanced countries.

A comparison with Sweden is particularly instructive. As discussed earlier, the female–male wage ratio is much higher in Sweden than in the United States. One study suggests this is due to differences between the two countries in wage structure, with Sweden's reward structure being considerably more compressed than that in the United States.[57] This compression is largely caused by the role unions play in determining wages in Sweden. With women disproportionately represented among lower-paid workers, wage compression in Sweden raises women's wages relative to men's. In contrast, U.S. wage-setting is highly decentralized and characterized by considerable wage differences between more and less-experienced workers and by occupation and industry. This study suggests that the United States would have as high a gender wage ratio as Sweden if it had the same compressed wage structure. In fact, the high level of U.S. wage inequality raises the gender gap in the United States compared to many other economically advanced countries. In contrast, the even larger gender gap in Japan (which was not included in this study) likely reflects factors specifically related to gender, including the high degree of segregation of women within broad occupational categories there.

[56] For a more detailed discussion, see Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "Gender Differences in Pay," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 75–100; and Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "Wage Structure and Gender Earnings Differentials: An International Comparison," *Economica* 63 (supplement 1996): 29–62. For additional evidence suggesting a role for institutions, see Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "Understanding International Differences in the Gender Pay Gap" *Journal of Labor Economics* 21, no. 1 (January 2003): 106–44; Blau and Kahn, "Women and Wages"; Mandel and Semyonov, "Family Policies, Wage Structures, and Gender Gaps"; and Anne Daly, Xin Meng, Akira Kawaguchi, and Karen Mumford, "The Gender Wage Gap in Four Countries," *Economic Record* 82, no. 257 (June 2006): 165–76.

[57] Blau and Kahn, "Wage Structure and Gender Earnings Differentials." Another possible explanatory factor, differences in the dispersion of test scores, is explored in Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "Do Cognitive Test Scores Explain Higher Wage Inequality?" *Review of Economics and Statistics* 87, no. 1 (February 2005): 184–92.

Another factor influencing differences in the gender wage gap across countries is the self-selection of women into employment. We discussed the role of the composition of the female labor force in Chapter 8, when we considered trends over time in the U.S. gender wage gap and now apply it again in examining international differences. As we have seen, female labor force participation rates vary considerably across the economically advanced countries. For example, female participation rates in Southern European countries are quite low. Interestingly, gender wage gaps in these countries also tend to be relatively low in comparison to those in the United States and other European countries with higher labor force participation rates. One study suggests that the reason for the relatively low gender wage gaps in Southern Europe is "probably not . . . more equal pay treatment for women" in these countries, but rather that in these countries, where market work among women is less common, it is concentrated among women who can earn especially high wages when they enter the labor market. This lowers the measured gender wage gap. In countries with higher participation rates, on the other hand, more low-wage women are included in the labor force and the measured gender wage gap is larger.[58]

COMPARABLE WORTH IN AUSTRALIA

Along with the Nordic countries, Australia has the distinction of having one of the highest female-to-male earnings ratios among economically advanced countries. As described here, the implementation of equal pay and, particularly, of comparable worth in Australia in the 1970s played a major role in raising the relative earnings of women.*

Australia's wage determination system is markedly different from that in the United States. In Australia, minimum wage rates for occupations are determined by government wage tribunals and unions play a larger role, though the wage system has become somewhat more decentralized in recent years, as discussed shortly.

Up to 1969, the Australian pay structure explicitly discriminated against women. Until 1950, female award rates were set at 54 percent of male rates; that year they were raised to 75 percent. In 1969, the concept of equal pay for equal work was implemented, and the award rate was raised to 100 percent. In 1972, the federal tribunal moved toward **comparable worth** by deciding that the "equal pay for equal work" concept should be expanded to "equal pay for work of equal value" in order to cover employees in predominantly female jobs.

As shown in Table 12-4, the result of the implementation of these policies, particularly of comparable worth, was an increase in the gender earnings ratio from 65 percent in 1970 to 86 percent by 1980. One might expect that if such policies increase the gender earnings ratio, they might result in lower female employment. As expected, female employment grew more slowly than would have been expected if their wages had not risen but the negative effect was nevertheless fairly small. One explanation for the small employment effect is that women and men held very different jobs and so this high degree of occupational segregation may have constituted a substantial barrier to women being replaced by men as their relative wages increased.

Since 1996, Australia's wage determination system has grown more decentralized; individual firms can now negotiate wage agreements, unions possess less bargaining power, and government wage tribunals play a much more modest role in determining wages. These recent changes have prompted concerns about possible negative effects on women's employment and earnings. In fact, the female–male earnings ratio has fluctuated between .86 and .90 since that time, but there has not been a noticeable decline. Still, it is important to keep in mind that these figures are only broad averages, and, moreover, they reflect only one dimension of what is happening in the labor market.

*This account of comparable worth is based on Robert G. Gregory and Vivian Ho, "Equal Pay and Comparable Worth: What Can the U.S. Learn from the Australian Experience?" The Australian National University, Centre for Economic Policy Research, Discussion Paper No. 123, July 1985; Mark Killingsworth, *The Economics of Comparable Worth* (Kalamazoo, MI: Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1990); Glenda Strachan and John Burgess, "Will Deregulating the Labor Market in Australia Improve the Employment Conditions of Women?" *Feminist Economics* 7 no. 2 (July 2001): 53–76; and Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, "Women's Work and Wages," in *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, 2nd edition, edited by Steven N. Durlauf and Lawrence E. Blume (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 762–72.

[58] Claudia Olivetti and Barbara Petrongolo, "Unequal Pay or Unequal Employment? A Cross-Country Analysis of Gender Gaps," *Journal of Labor Economics* 26, no. 4 (October 2008): 621–54; quotation is from p. 625.

Demographic Trends

Table 12-5 provides data on trends in various demographic indicators, including fertility, births to unwed mothers, marriage, and divorce for selected economically advanced countries for 1980 through the mid 2000s, though many of these trends started quite a bit earlier. As would be expected in view of the increasing labor force participation rate of women in all these countries, the table shows that fertility rates declined in most of them. With the exception of the United States, fertility rates in these countries are below the replacement rate of 2.1 births per woman, and in several cases they are considerably lower.

A second notable recent pattern is that those economically advanced countries with the highest female labor force participation rates also have the highest fertility rates and vice versa. This is suggested by the data in Table 12-5 and has also been noted by researchers considering a larger number of countries. This positive relationship is surprising in light of the fact that we tend to observe a negative relationship between fertility and female labor force participation when we look across all countries in the world and when we look at these decisions at the individual level as discussed in Chapters 4 and 10. Researchers have pointed to at least three factors behind the positive relationship between female labor force participation and fertility in economically advanced countries: the degree to which family-friendly policies are available, the flexibility of the labor market including the availability of part-time work, and the extent to which child care time is distributed more equally among parents. In the Nordic countries, for instance, fertility rates and female labor force participation are boosted by their strong family-friendly policies of long paid parental leave and subsidized child care combined with the fact that fathers share substantially in child care.[59] In the United States, while the workplace is less family-friendly than in these countries, out-of-home child care is generally available (at least for children over age 2), part-time work is a regular feature of the labor market, and fathers play an important and growing role in

[59] For discussion of these factors, see Anne H. Gauthier, "The Impact of Family Policies on Fertility in Industrialized Countries: A Review of the Literature," *Population Research and Policy Review* 26, no. 3 (June 2007): 323–46; Alicia Adsera, "Changing Fertility Rates in Developed Countries: The Impact of Labor Market Institutions, *Journal of Population Economics* 17, no. 1 (February 2004): 17–43; Daniela Del Boca, Silvia Pasqua, and Chiara Pronzato, "Fertility and Employment in Italy, France, and the UK," *Labour* 19 (Special Issue 2005): 51–77; and James Feyrer, Bruce Sacerdote, and Ariel Dora Stern, "Will the Stork Return to Europe and Japan? Understanding Fertility Within Developed Nations," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 3–22.

TABLE 12-5 Demographic Trends, Selected Economically Advanced Countries[a]

	Total Fertility Rate[b]		Births to Unmarried Women (as % of all live births)		Marriage Rate per 1,000 Population Age 15–64		Divorce Rate per 1,000 Population Age 15–64		Single-Parent Households (as % of all households with children)[c]	
	1980	2006	1980	2005	1980	2005	1980	2005	1980	2006
Canada	1.7	1.5	12.8	26.0	11.5	6.8	3.7	3.2	12.7	19.3
Denmark	1.5	1.9	33.2	45.7	8.0	10.1	4.1	4.3	13.4	20.5
France	1.9	2.0	11.4	48.4	9.7	7.1	2.4	3.5	11.9	17.1
Germany	1.4	1.3	15.1	29.2	8.2	7.0	2.5	4.0	15.2	20.1
Ireland	3.2	1.9	5.9	32.0	10.9	7.2	[d]	1.2	7.2	22.6
Italy	1.6	1.4	4.3	13.8	8.7	6.5	0.3	1.2	n.a.	n.a.
Japan	1.8	1.3	0.8	2.0	9.8	8.4	1.8	3.1	4.9	9.8
Netherlands	1.6	1.7	4.1	34.9	9.6	6.7	2.7	2.9	9.6	15.3
Spain	2.2	1.4	3.9	26.6	9.4	7.0	n.a.	1.7	n.a.	n.a.
Sweden	1.7	1.9	39.7	55.4	7.1	7.5	3.7	3.4	11.2	19.6
United Kingdom	1.9	1.9	11.5	42.9	11.6	8.0	4.1	3.9	13.9	24.1
United States	1.8	2.1	18.4	36.8	15.9	11.2	7.9	5.4	19.5	28.3

[a] Data are for stated year or closest year available.

[b] See footnote a, Table 12-1.

[c] The definition of children differs slightly across countries. See source below.

[d] Divorce not allowed by law prior to 1997.

n.a. Not available.

Source: For all data but fertility rates, U.S. Census Bureau, *U.S. Statistical Abstract* (2007 and 2008). Fertility rates are from World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, Online Database, at www.worldbank.org.

child care, all factors serving to raise aggregate rates of female labor force participation and fertility.

In contrast, as shown in Table 12-5, labor force participation rates and fertility are quite low in the countries of Southern Europe (including Italy and Spain), and Japan. In the case of Southern Europe, high unemployment rates have been identified as one key factor. High unemployment rates deter labor market participation via the discouraged worker effect discussed in Chapter 4, and they raise the cost of children (thereby reducing fertility), by making reentry difficult for employed women who leave the labor force to bear children. The lack of adequate part-time work and adequate out-of-home child care, along with a more traditional division of labor in unpaid work, further deter female labor market participation and fertility in these countries. With the exception of unemployment problems, related explanations have been offered for the co-existence of low female participation and fertility rates in Japan. Low fertility rates there have been attributed to the "inhospitable" nature of the Japanese labor market for women, inadequate government support of families, combined with men's virtual lack of participation in unpaid household work.[60]

[60] Frances McCall Rosenbluth, "Conclusion," in *A Political Economy of Japan's Low Fertility*, edited by Frances McCall Rosenbluth (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

The low fertility rates in much of Europe, as well as Japan, are expected to lead to substantial declines in population in years to come. Governments in these countries are paying close attention to fertility trends because reductions in population size may well reduce their international power and prestige. The declines could be moderated, however, if greater immigration were encouraged, or perhaps if countries were to adopt policies that better enable women to combine employment and childrearing.[61]

Another significant demographic trend is that marriage rates began declining in all of the selected countries in the 1970s and continued their decline through 2005, as shown in Table 12-5. One striking finding is that the marriage rate in the United States remained among the highest in 2005, at 11.2 marriages per 1,000 people age 15 to 64. In Japan, on the other hand, the marriage rate fell considerably from 14 in 1970 (data not shown in table) to 8.4 by 2005.[62] Among the explanations for the trend in Japan is not only the growing economic independence of women, but also the especially low status of married women; husbands spend many hours working for their employers and do very little housework. Further, as noted earlier, wives in Japan have a particularly strong cultural obligation to care for their husbands' elderly parents. Interestingly, Sweden's marriage rate has remained at a low level for a long period of time, perhaps because getting married there continues to offer few tax or other advantages in this highly secular society.[63]

As would be expected, while marriage rates have declined, rates of cohabitation have continued to rise. The increase in cohabitation is a major factor in explaining the dramatic rise in births to unmarried mothers that occurred in the great majority of economically advanced nations, although the degree to which these factors are associated varies considerably across countries.[64] It is estimated that 35 percent of Swedish women ages 20 to 40 are cohabiting as compared with 9 percent of U.S. women.[65] As may be seen in Table 12-5, the proportion of births to unwed mothers in 2005 was as high as 55 percent in Sweden and 37 percent in the United States. Nonetheless, virtually all of the babies born to unmarried mothers in Sweden and 40 percent of babies born to unmarried mothers in the United States were actually brought home to live with cohabiting fathers.[66] The high rates of cohabitation in Sweden, the other Nordic countries, and increasingly elsewhere, suggest that most

[61] Paul Demeny, "Population Policy Dilemmas in Europe at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century," *Population and Development Review* 29, no. 1 (March 2003): 1–28; Lee, "The Demographic Transition"; contributions in Alan Booth and Ann C. Crouter, eds. *The New Population Problem: Why Families in Developing Countries Are Shrinking and What It Means* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005); and Rosenbluth, ed., *A Political Economy of Japan's Low Fertility*, Ch. 9.

[62] The source of the 1970 figure for Japan is from Constance Sorrentino, "The Changing Family in International Perspective," *Monthly Labor Review* 113, no. 3 (March 1990): 41–60.

[63] For a detailed discussion regarding factors affecting Japan, see Hiroshi Ono, "Divorce in Japan: Why It Happens, Why It Doesn't," in *Institutional Change in Japan*, edited by Magnus Blomstrom and Sumner La Croix (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 221–36. For factors explaining variation across Europe, see Matthijs Kalmijn, "Explaining Cross-National Differences in Marriage, Cohabitation, and Divorce in Europe, 1990–2000," *Population Studies* 61 no. 3 (2007): 243–63.

[64] For instance, Kathleen Kiernan observes that, in the Netherlands and Germany, the rate of unwed births is lower than would be expected based on cohabitation rates, while the reverse is true for the United Kingdom and Ireland in "Cohabitation in Western Europe: Trends, Issues and Implications," in *Just Living Together: Implications of Cohabitation on Families, Children and Social Policy*, edited by Alan Booth and Ann C. Crouter, (Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 2002), pp. 3–31.

[65] The figure for Sweden is from OECD, *Society at a Glance 2007*, Table SF8.1. The cohabitation figure for the United States is for ages 15–44 and is from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Fertility, Family Planning and Reproductive Health of U.S. Women: Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth," *Vital and Health Statistics*, series 23, no. 25, Table 47 (December 2005).

[66] The figures for Sweden and the United States, respectively, are from Constance Sorrentino, "The Changing Family in International Perspective," *Monthly Labor Review* 113, no. 3 (March 1990): 41–58; and Larry Bumpass and H.-H. Lu, "Trends in Cohabitation and Implications for Children's Family Context in the United States," *Population Studies* 54, no. 1 (March 2000): 29–41.

men and women continue to choose to live with partners, even as marriage rates decline, albeit without legal (or religious) commitments. Undoubtedly such couples, much like those who do marry, are seeking companionship, but probably also gains from economies of scale as well as from specialization and exchange. Rates of cohabitation for Japan are not known, but are likely to be low, given that births to unwed mothers remain negligible.

Family structure has also changed since the 1970s because of rising divorce rates, though again trends vary considerably across countries. In the United States, the divorce rate increased considerably from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s.[67] Although it has fallen somewhat since then and now stands at 5.4 divorces per 1,000 people age 15 to 64, it remains the highest of the countries shown in Table 12-5. The rates in Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom are next highest, ranging between 3.9 to 4.3 divorces per 1,000 people age 15 to 64. The divorce rate in Japan, historically quite low, increased from 1.8 in 1980 to 3.1 in 2005. In Italy, the divorce rate has risen to only 1.2, most likely a result of the strong influence of the Vatican against divorce.

Families headed by single parents, generally mothers, are most common in the United States, but have also been increasing in a number of other economically advanced countries. Regrettably, statistics for different countries are not entirely comparable because some include cohabitors with children among married couples while others do not, and age limits for children differ as well. Although women most often become single mothers as a result of divorce or marital separation, the proportion of never-married mothers has been increasing. As shown in Table 12-5, in 2006, single parents maintained 28 percent of households with dependent children in the United States, and rates in the United Kingdom and Ireland, among others, were not all that far behind. In Japan, on the other hand, the rate was just under 10 percent.[68]

In all these countries, single-parent families, especially those headed by women, are among the most economically vulnerable. Policies to assist them vary considerably. On the one hand, in Sweden, single mothers, like all adults, are encouraged to work for pay and are given sufficient support to do so, including parental leave and day care. In addition, Sweden makes available a child support "advance" system, which provides awards to custodial parents when the other parent fails to pay the agreed-upon amount of support. The United States, on the other hand, as we saw in Chapters 10 and 11, provides considerably less assistance. One consequence of these differences, as well as Sweden's more highly compressed wage structure, which leads to a small proportion of single women earning below-poverty wages, is that poverty rates for mother-only families are considerably lower in Sweden than in the United States.[69]

Housework

Comparable international data on gender differences in time spent on housework are limited but a number of sources provide at least some information. As noted earlier, one consistent finding is that men do considerably less housework than women. Time use data for 2002 suggests that married women spent around twice as much time on housework as their male counterparts in both Sweden and the United States.[70] This may seem surprising in light of Sweden's more egalitarian social policies, including paid parental leave and women's higher rates of labor force participation. In fact, the aggregate figures mask important differences. For instance, in the United States, wives who earn relatively more than their husbands spend more time in housework than those who earn as much as their husbands, while the opposite is true in Sweden. This finding suggests that relatively high-earning wives in the United States sense a need to exhibit "gender-appropriate" roles in the household while this is not the case for wives in Sweden.[71] Thus, the culture in Sweden does seem more amenable to shifting gender roles in the labor market and household. In Japan, in sharp contrast, women spent 8.6 times as much time on housework as men, consistent with women's more traditional role in Japanese society.[72]

Summary on Economically Advanced Countries

Overall, the available evidence indicates that real progress has been made toward greater economic equality for women in economically advanced countries over the last several decades, but it also highlights the very different experiences in specific countries and the challenges that remain. For instance, in Sweden, with its high rate of labor force participation and high female-to-male earnings ratio, women continue to hold different jobs than men and spend twice as much time than men in housework. In Japan women are entering the labor market, but do not fare as well in other respects, and the gender earnings ratio has only begun to rise in recent years. In the United States, large numbers of single mothers continue to live in poverty. Government policies, along with cultural and historical differences, no doubt help to explain the considerable differences among countries. Much remains to be learned about these factors, and also about ways to ensure the continuation of progress.

CHALLENGES FACING WOMEN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Women in developing countries merit special attention because they face major challenges and difficulties as a result of the extremely low income levels of these countries.[73] A telling statistic is that the poorest two-fifths of the world's population receives only 3 percent of the income, while the wealthiest 15 percent receives nearly 80 percent.[74] Not surprisingly, then, developing countries are generally characterized by an extremely low standard of living, high rates of infant mortality, short life expectancy, and high rates of illiteracy. In many instances, their high rates of fertility tend to exacerbate some of the other problems. Thus, most people in developing

[67] A measure of divorces per 1,000 married persons is preferred, especially in international comparisons, because the measure reported here, divorces per 1,000 population, is influenced by the incidence of marriage—where marriage rates are lower, this rate is also lower. Figures were not available for this measure, however.
[68] The relatively high rate of single parenthood in Sweden is not due to high rates of cohabitation because cohabitors are counted as married couples, not single-parent families. On the other hand, in the United States, some "single-parent" families may be cohabitors with children. See Sorrentino, "The Changing Family in International Perspective."
[69] For policies and evidence, see Karen Christopher, Paula England, Katherin Ross, Timothy Smeeding, and Sara McLanahan, "The Gender Gap in Poverty in Modern Nations: Single Motherhood, the Market, and the State," *Sociological Perspectives* 45, no. 3 (September 2002): 219–42; and Timothy M. Smeeding, "Public Policy, Economic Inequality, and Poverty: The United States in Comparative Perspective," *Social Science Quarterly* 86, S1 (December 2005): 955–83.

[70] Figures reported in the text are from Makiko Fuwa and Philip N. Cohen, "Housework and Social Policy," *Social Science Research* 36, no. 2 (June 2007): 512–30.
[71] Marie Evertsson and Magnus Nermo, "Dependence Within Families and the Division of Labor: Comparing Sweden and the United States," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 66, no. 5 (December 2004): 1272–86.
[72] Data are from Fuwa and Cohen, "Housework and Social Policy." See also, Myra H. Strober and Agnes Miling Kaneko Chan, *The Road Winds Uphill All the Way: Gender, Work, and Family in the United States and Japan* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).
[73] A number of useful books and many interesting articles on women in developing countries have been published since Ester Boserup's landmark 1970 volume, *Women's Role in Economic Development*. More recently, see, for instance, Ester Boserup, *Economic and Demographic Relationships in Development* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); T. Paul Schultz, ed., *Investment in Women's Human Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) ; and Esther Duflo, "Gender Equality in Development."
[74] Calculated from World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, 2007.

countries live in extremely difficult circumstances. In addition, women most often bear a disproportionate share of the burdens of economic and social deprivation.[75]

It is not possible for us to fully describe the situation of women in developing countries here. Doing so would require a book considerably larger than this one because of the great variation in many respects among the different countries in this category, as shown in Table 12-1 and the accompanying discussion. Some can only euphemistically be called *developing*, while others are soon likely to be reclassified as *economically advanced*. They also differ considerably with respect to religion, customs, geographic location, and economic resource bases, among other factors.[76] Progress within countries may also be very uneven, as is well illustrated by developments in China and India. Both of these countries have recently experienced considerable growth in per capita income along with the creation of modern cities, while their rural populations have been left behind to a great extent.[77]

In this section we focus on four issues that are of great importance in developing countries and are of particular concern to women. The first is education, which enhances prospects for development and also offers the promise of raising women's economic status. The second is the controversial issue of public policies intended to influence fertility, such as those that restrict access to information about means for controlling family size, on the one hand or go so far as to penalize couples to limit the number of children they have on the other. The third is the topic of child labor, which has been receiving considerable attention recently. Finally, we consider the potential role of microcredit in improving women's economic status.

Education as the Pathway to Empowerment

The days when it was widely accepted that it was unnecessary to send daughters to school are coming to an end. Not only in affluent countries but in a growing number of developing countries, virtually all girls and boys attend primary schools, and secondary school attendance is rising as well. Nonetheless, as discussed earlier, in many of the poorest countries, primary education is still not universal and girls continue to receive far less education than boys. Hence, as we have seen, illiteracy rates among women in these countries continue to be substantially higher than among men.

Women's educational attainment has been historically lower than men's for several reasons. From a purely economic standpoint, to the extent that girls do more housework than boys, including caring for siblings, the opportunity cost of sending daughters rather than sons to school is greater. Even more important, sons will become the breadwinners and in most cultures are expected to support their parents in their old age, while girls marry into another family and rarely have independent means to support their parents. In addition, tradition and religion play an important role. In some societies, education, beyond a minimal level, may actually reduce a woman's chance of marrying. In any case, education is likely to postpone marriage, which could defer and possibly reduce the bride-price (still common in many countries) when she does marry.[78] Finally, as discussed in Chapter 6, to the extent that girls receive a smaller return on their educational investments than boys due to a shorter expected work life, it may be that they opt to invest less in it.

In recent years, a very promising development, perhaps hastened by conferences on the status of the world's women as well as the 2000 U.N. Millennium Summit, is a

[75] Allen Tuovi, "Economic Development and the Feminization of Poverty," in *Women's Work in the World Economy*, edited by Nancy Folbre, Barbara Beigmann, Bina Agarwal, and Maria Floro (New York: New York University Press, 1992), pp. 107–19.
[76] Boserup, "Obstacles to Advancement of Women."
[77] United Nations, *Human Development Report 2003*.
[78] Peter Glick, "What Policies Will Reduce Gender Schooling Gaps in Developing Countries: Evidence and Interpretation," *World Development* 36, no. 9 (2008): 1623–46; and M. Anne Hill and Elizabeth M. King, "Women's Education and Economic Well-Being," *Feminist Economics* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 21–46.

greater emphasis on women's education. There is growing awareness that education is not only the key to independence and empowerment for women, but that it gives women both the incentive and ability to reduce their fertility as well as the opportunity to better contribute to their families. There is also growing recognition of the substantial links between women's education and a country's standard of living and general well-being.[79]

Not only does education enhance women's potential for entry into the labor force and increase their potential earnings, it also benefits their families in a number of other important ways. For instance, with education women are better able to read labels and instructions and are thus likely to be better informed about nutrition, proper hygiene, and health care, including birth control. Indeed, one recent study finds that mothers' numeracy and literacy skills improve their children's health outcomes.[80] In addition, parental education significantly positively affects children's schooling levels, with some evidence that a mother's education particularly affects her daughters' schooling.[81] Finally, because the education of women increases the opportunity cost of raising children (due to the increased value of the market time), they are likely to have fewer of them. Smaller families in turn allow parents to devote more of their limited resources to each child.

From a societal perspective, education of women is an effective means of encouraging voluntary family planning that is vastly preferable to government policies such as those in China, that penalize some families for having additional children.[82] Greater literacy may also help to stem the rapid spread of the HIV/AIDS virus, although education is certainly not a panacea for this epidemic. Further, as discussed earlier, women's education and economic empowerment not only shift more resources toward children but also reduce the considerable imbalance between resources devoted to boys as compared to girls. And, evidence suggests that gender equality in education promotes economic growth for the society as a whole.[83] Finally, at the broader societal level, education is necessary for a better informed citizenry, so crucial to the achievement and functioning of a healthy democracy.

Fertility and Population Control

As already noted, fertility and population control in developing countries are critically linked not only to women's economic status but to the economic viability of these countries, especially the poorest among them. The methods developing countries use to control fertility range from encouraging the voluntary use of contraceptives to coercive population control enforced by the government. China, for instance, has combined policies encouraging contraception and sex education, with limits on the number of children couples are permitted to have.[84] In many other developing countries, family planning is entirely voluntary and increasingly common, while in others, family

[79] See, for instance, Stephan Klasen, "Low Schooling for Girls, Slow Growth for All? Cross-Country Evidence of the Effect of Gender Inequality in Education on Economic Development, *The World Bank Economic Review* 16, no. 3 (2002): 345–73.
[80] Paul Glewwe, "Why Does Mother's Schooling Raise Child Health in Developing Countries?" *Journal of Human Resources* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 124–59; and Sharada Weir, "An Examination of Some Mechanisms Underlying Externality Benefits of Girls' Schooling," *Journal of Population Economics* 20 (February 2007): 203–22.
[81] Hill and King, "Women's Education and Economic Well-Being"; and Duncan Thomas, "Like Father, Like Son: Like Mother, Like Daughter."
[82] Hill and King, "Women's Education and Economic Well-Being."
[83] For a review of this literature, see Mikkula and Miles, "Role of Gender Equality in Development."
[84] Regarding China, see Judith Banister, "Shortage of Girls in China Today," *Journal of Population Research* 21, no. 1 (2004): 19–45. The policies adopted by India have been less coercive but at times the government's tactics have not been far from compulsion. See Amartya Sen, "Fertility and Coercion," *University of Chicago Law Review* 63, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 1035–61.

planning, including contraceptive use, is quite rare. Among the reasons for this are a lack of adequate information, lack of availability or high cost of contraceptives, concerns about their side effects, or, in some cases, religious strictures that specifically discourage their use. Expanding women's education is an exceptionally promising solution to controlling population growth because it enhances women's economic status while also reducing fertility, without using any form of compulsion.

The data in Table 12-1 and Figure 12-2 provide evidence that considerable strides have been made in reducing fertility in much of the developing world over the last 30 years. Nonetheless, the very high rates that persist in Sub-Saharan Africa and a few countries in the Middle East and North Africa are a matter of serious concern, especially because most of these countries are very poor.[85]

A second concern is that in a handful of countries efforts to control fertility, whether voluntary or coercive, appear to have substantially increased the ratio of men to women in the population. The increase in this ratio is especially pronounced in countries in East and South Asia, including not only China and India but also South Korea and Taiwan, where there is a strong preference for boys over girls. This preference is evident in their historically lopsided sex ratios in the population, particularly in China and India, which indicate the presence of considerably more men than women, as compared to what would be expected based on normal rates of infant mortality and subsequent survival rates.[86] Although about 105 to 106 boys would normally be expected to be born for every 100 girls, recent estimates put this figure at 111 to 112 for China and India, and in some Indian provinces the figure is considerably higher. The figures are slightly lower at 108 to 109 boys for every 100 girls in South Korea and Taiwan.[87]

In the past, in some cases imbalanced sex ratios were the result of outright infanticide and, in other cases, of girls being given less food and medical care than boys, amounting to what has been termed *passive infanticide*, so that the family would have more resources for present or future sons. In recent years, the major factor leading to the high sex ratios in these countries is the availability of pre-natal sex-determination tests and use of sex-selective abortion as a form of birth control. In China, and perhaps elsewhere as well, another contributing factor is that births of girls are underreported. Moreover, these high sex ratios prevail despite the fact that sex-determination tests were officially banned in all these countries in the 1990s, with the exception of Taiwan. The impact appears especially pronounced in second- and higher-order births, suggesting that if a couple already has a girl, they are much less willing to accept another. The bias is also much more pronounced in rural areas, where sons, according to custom, must support parents in old age.[88] Urban couples are more likely to receive pensions, lessening the importance of having a son.

One promising trend is that while the sex ratio in South Korea is still higher than would be expected, as shown by the figures earlier, it has declined in recent years. As an explanation, one recent study points to a considerable reduction in son preference as measured by wives' reports regarding whether they "must" have a son. In fact, changing social norms across the population at large, not just among those who are highly educated, appear to be behind this trend. What remains to be seen is whether the strong

[85] In the Middle East and North Africa, fertility rates are nearly 5 or higher in Yemen and in the West Bank and Gaza.
[86] Banister, "Shortage of Girls in China Today"; and V. Bhaskar and Bishnupriya Gupta, "India's Missing Girls: Biology, Customs, and Economic Development," *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 221–38.
[87] CIA, *The World Factbook* (2008), available at www.cia.gov.
[88] Banister, "Shortage of Girls in China Today."

preference for sons in other countries, including China and India, will similarly lessen in coming years.[89]

Fewer baby girls translate into a shortage of marriageable women—a phenomenon already observed in China, for example. Ironically, the declining supply of women, which resulted from a bias against women, may eventually increase their value in the "marriage market" and girls who are the only children in their families may benefit from greater parental investments than would have been the case if they grew up with brothers.[90] This policy may result in larger social consequences as well. Among the dire predictions, the large numbers of unmarried men may substantially increase crime rates, the kidnapping and trafficking of women, and perhaps even foment social unrest.[91]

It is particularly interesting to take a closer look at China, with just over 20 percent of the world's population, and thus the distinction of being the most populous country in the world. Around 1980, it instituted a particularly rigid **one-child policy** for urban residents unless the first child was incapacitated or died. In rural areas, couples were allowed to have a second child if their first child was a daughter. The one-child policy was pursued through political and social pressure, as well as by creating powerful economic incentives. Couples with a single child were entitled to such perks as cash bonuses, longer maternity leave, better child care, and preferential housing. However, couples who had more than the number allowed, particularly in the city, could face steep fines or the loss of their jobs or other benefits.[92]

This policy was rigorously administered until 1983, when it became clear that it was not accepted by the public and was thus eased somewhat. Greater emphasis was placed on other ways of reducing fertility such as later marriage and education about contraception. Also, more control was given to autonomous regions and provinces in setting their own policies, including exemptions for minority groups. Since the late 1990s, the one-child policy has been eased further. For instance, married men and women living in large urban areas who are both "only" children are permitted to have two children. And, in some instances, wealthier couples are able to pay the required fines and have a larger family. China's easing of its policy was likely prompted not only by social pressures, but also by rising incomes and economic growth, and the fact that the current fertility rate in China is now just below the replacement level.[93] In March 2008, a senior Chinese official nonetheless announced that the one-child policy would continue for the coming decade.[94] Recent history suggests, however, that further easing is likely, even if the official policy remains in name.

[89] Woojin Chung and Monica Das Gupta, "Why Is Son Preference Declining in South Korea? The Role of Development and Public Policy, and the Implications for China and India," World Bank Working Paper, No. 4373 (2007); and Choe Sang-Hun, "Where Boys Were Kings, a Shift Toward Baby Girls," *New York Times* (December 23, 2007).
[90] Vanessa L. Fong, "China's One-Child Policy and the Empowerment of Urban Daughters," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 4 (2002): 1098–109; and Ming Tsui and Lynne Rich, "The Only Child and Educational Opportunity for Girls in Urban China," *Gender & Society* 16, no. 1 (February 2002): 74–92. It is also argued that another possible effect of parents' preference for sons, along with a preference for children who eventually marry, is that it may lead to a society in which upper-class families have boys because they have a good chance in life and a good chance to marry, while lower-income parents tend to choose daughters, who would have a good chance to marry men who are as well or better off than they are. See Lena Edlund, "Son Preference, Sex Ratios, and Marriage Patterns," *Journal of Political Economy* 107, no. 6, pt. 1 (December 1999): 1275–304.
[91] Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea M. den Boer, *Bare Branches: Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); and Esther Duflo, "Too Many Boys . . . ," *Vox* (August 18 2008), available online at www.voxeu.org.
[92] For a detailed study of this policy, see Judith Bannister, *China's Changing Population* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).
[93] Therese Hesketh, Li Lu, and Zhu Wei Xing, "The Effect of China's One-Child Family Policy After 25 Years"; *New England Journal of Medicine* 353, no. 11 (15 September 2005): 1171–76; and Judith Banister, "Shortage of Girls in China Today," *Journal of Population Research* 21, no. 1 (May 2004): 19–45.
[94] Jim Yardley, "China Says One-Child Policy Will Stay for At Least Another Decade," *New York Times* (March 11, 2008).

Table 12-1 shows that family planning policies in China reduced fertility substantially from 5.7 children per woman in 1970 to 2.0 by 2006. The greatest decline occurred in urban areas, presumably because of tighter government control and greater penalties. Fertility rates declined much less in rural areas, where the majority of the population lives, in part because families there are more economically dependent on their children, particularly their sons, as is generally the case in traditional societies. In addition, unlike most urban residents, they are not entitled to old-age pensions or heavily subsidized housing.

Even though the one-child policy in China probably increased discrimination against girls at least in the short run, and women are far from achieving equality either in the household or the public sphere, some progress toward gender equality is evident. Women's labor force participation in China is relatively high compared with that of countries such as India and Japan, and women's educational attainment has risen considerably. Despite these gains, recent research suggests that the growing private sector in China has been accompanied by an increase in gender discrimination, as well as an increase in the gender earnings gap.[95]

Child Labor

As discussed earlier, girls often face particular challenges in developing countries because of gender bias in parental investments in education, and, in some cases, even in the nutrition and health care they receive. Compounding these difficulties, many girls as well as boys in developing countries are engaged in **child labor.** While definitions vary somewhat, child labor goes beyond performing tasks after school for the family business or farm, doing chores for one's own household, or for children age 12 to 14, doing some "light work" such as working for pay after school. Rather, child labor typically refers to work that prevents children from going to school or that involves potential physical or mental harm. Using this definition, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that in 2004 166 million boys and girls ages 5 to 14 were child laborers. Two-fifths of these children (74 million) were employed in hazardous work such as mining and construction. For a slightly earlier year, 2000, it is estimated that 8.4 million children were subject to the **worst forms of child labor**: these include forced labor conditions or bondage; child trafficking; forced prostitution, pornography or other illegal activities; and recruitment into armed conflict.[96] More often than not, children end up in these situations because their families are in a dire economic situation, not because their parents are indifferent or seek to exploit them.

The problems faced by girl child laborers have raised a particular set of concerns because many girls are employed as domestic workers in other people's homes, and are hence "invisible." For this reason they may well be undercounted in official statistics. In many cases, these arrangements are "akin to slavery"; the girls often work long hours, are at the mercy of the family for whom they work, and may receive no compensation apart from room and board. Helping them is a difficult task because the prevailing norm is that domestic work is female work, regardless of the working

[95] For a fuller assessment of women's status, see Elaine Zukerman, *China: Country Gender Review* Washington, DC: World Bank, 2009); Junsen Zhang, Jun Han, Pak-Wai Liu, and Yaohui Zhao, "Trends in the Gender Earnings Differential in Urban China, 1988–2004," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 61, no. 2 (January 2008): 224–43; and Gunseli Berik, Xiao-yuan Dong, and Gale Summerfield, "China's Transition and Feminist Economics," *Feminist Economics* 13, no. 3–4 (July–October 2007): 1–33.

[96] For 2004 figures, see International Labour Organization, *The End of Child Labour: Within Reach* (Geneva: ILO 2006). For detailed definitions and the 2000 figure on children involved in the worst forms of child labor, see International Labour Organization, *Every Child Counts: New Global Estimates on Child Labour* (Geneva: ILO, 2002).

conditions or the individual's age.[97] Nevertheless, some efforts are underway to inform these girls of their rights and raise awareness about abuse, as well as provide various forms of assistance.[98]

Concerning the larger issue of child labor, proposed solutions abound, but in order for them to be successfully implemented, alternative ways for solving the problem of dire poverty must be found and each country's specific cultural and economic conditions must also be considered. For instance, proposals to ban imports to the United States of goods produced in countries using child labor may merely cause children's employment to shift to other sectors where conditions may be even more harmful. In one instance, just the anticipation of such policies caused many girls in Bangladesh to be forced out of work stitching carpets and into prostitution.[99] Another possibility is for the countries themselves to ban all forms of child labor and seriously enforce the policy. However, any one country may well be reluctant to adopt such a ban if others do not take similar actions, because doing so unilaterally would likely make its producers less competitive and hurt the economy. Further, such a policy ignores the harsh reality that, more often than not, children are employed out of economic necessity.

Another option is the establishment of a set of minimal labor standards, such as ensuring safe working conditions and the right to organize, that would be universally adopted by all countries.[100] However, this type of policy faces considerable opposition in many developing countries because of concern it would lead to a decline in their exports. Concern also centers on the questions of who would enforce such standards and what sort of punitive measures would be taken if they were violated, as well as fear that their adoption might leave children and their families in developing countries worse off.[101]

Policies that encourage a combination of school and work, or those that encourage schooling by providing economic incentives such as free lunches or a payment to the student's family, may help families to survive and end the cycle of poverty that results from lack of education. However, for such approaches to be successful, schools need to be accessible and of sufficient quality, obstacles that must be overcome in many parts of the developing world. Another complementary policy is to improve access to credit so that families can weather difficult economic times without their children's help. Finally, government policies that improve the adult labor market or increase families' incomes would be expected to reduce their dependence on child labor.[102]

As may be seen by this discussion of the problem of child labor and the possible policies to address it, no simple solution is readily available. The issue is of particular concern

[97] Regarding girl domestic workers, see International Labour Organization, "The Girl Child Labourer: ILO-IPEC's Response," Unit 2: Gender Issues in the World of Work, ILO/SEAPAT's OnLine Gender Learning & Information Module, at www.ilo.org; and International Labour Organization, *IPEC Action Against Child Labour: Achievements, Lessons Learned and Indications for the Future 1998–1999* (Geneva: ILO, 1999); and International Labour Organization, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives? Understanding Child Domestic Labour and Responses to It* (Geneva: ILO, 2004).

[98] International Labour Organization, *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives?*

[99] Kaushik Basu, "International Labor Standards and Child Labor," *Challenge* 42, no. 5 (September–October 1999): 80–93; and Miriam Wasserman, "Eliminating Child Labor," *Regional Review* 10, no. 2 (Second Quarter 2000): 8–17.

[100] Druscilla K. Brown, "Labor Standards: Where Do They Belong on the International Trade Agenda?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 15, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 89–112.

[101] For a discussion of the issues, see Kaushik Basu, "Child Labor: Cause, Consequence, and Cure, with Remarks on International Labor Standards," *Journal of Economic Literature* 37, no. 3 (September 1999): 1083–119.

[102] Kaushik Basu and Zafiris Tzannatos, "The Global Child Labor Problem: What Do We Know and What Can We Do?" *The World Bank Economic Review* 17, no. 2 (2003): 147–73; Basu, "Child Labor"; and Eric V. Edmonds and Nina Pavcnik, "Child Labor in the Global Economy," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 199–220.

for girls because employment as domestic workers is far less visible, a circumstance that makes these girls particularly vulnerable to exploitation. While child labor remains a serious problem in developing countries, it is at least encouraging that ongoing international efforts appear to be helping to reduce the worst forms of child labor.[103]

Microcredit for Women: Lifeline or Mirage?

Most people are well aware that in a modern economy, businesses, large and small, are heavily dependent on credit. Funds are needed to get an enterprise started, to keep it going, and often even more so to expand it to an efficient scale. In developing countries the amounts needed are often rather small, but have nonetheless been beyond the reach of millions of poor people, particularly poor women, who tend to lack contacts with potential lenders, have no collateral, and are generally regarded as poor credit risks. At the same time, demand for labor in large-scale agriculture continues to decline as a result of mechanization, and demand in the emerging modern sectors is frequently inadequate to absorb rapidly growing populations. Therefore it is not surprising that interest in self-employment has been growing as one solution to this problem, and in the role credit can play in facilitating it. In recent years, both governments and nongovernmental organizations have recognized the contribution that the extension of even small loans could make toward increasing the earnings and raising the standard of living of the poor.[104]

Microcredit loans started with the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh in 1976. Subsequently similar institutions were founded in other developing countries, including Indonesia, India, and Peru.[105] In 2006, the founder of the Grameen Bank, Muhammad Yunus, along with the bank itself, received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their efforts to improve the lives of poor women. Such programs now even operate in depressed areas of economically advanced countries, including the United States, as discussed in Chapter 11. Here, our focus is on the role of such programs in developing countries.

One of the distinctive features of microcredit institutions is that they mainly extend credit to women. While the proportion of women among those obtaining loans from commercial banks is rarely above 20 percent, it is about 70 percent among those who borrow from the poverty-centered development banks, and some of them make loans only to women. Local groups of borrowers guarantee one another's loans, and no one receives a second loan until all the first loans are repaid. This arrangement has led to high repayment rates, often an astonishing 90 percent, which have enabled these banks not only to continue but to expand.[106] In recent years, there has been a push for international agencies to channel funds to some of the "poorest of the poor" in these countries, those living on less than $1 per day. Since 2000, one-half of U.S. funds for international microenterprise programs have been mandated to be spent on this group. As of 2006, however, only 30 percent of such funds reached the very poor, thereby falling quite a bit short of the target.[107]

[103] For recent trends, see International Labour Organization, *The End of Child Labour.*
[104] Interestingly, there are historic precedents in nineteenth-century Europe of similar organizations that lasted for many decades. Aidan Hollis and Arthur Sweetman found that organizations that obtained funds from depositors, especially if they were also able to adjust interest rates, were more long lasting than those that relied on charity in "Microcredit: What Can We Learn from the Past?" *World Development* 26, no. 10 (October 1998): 1875–89.
[105] For an excellent review of the research on microcredit, see Beatriz Armendariz de Aghion and Jonathan Morduch, *The Economics of Microfinance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).
[106] Figures are from Rosintan D. M. Panjaitan-Driodisuryo and Kathleen Cloud, "Gender, Self-Employment and Microcredit Programs: An Indonesian Case Study," *The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance* 39 (Special Issue, 1999): 769–79; See also, Sengupta and Aubuchon, "The Microfinance Revolution."
[107] US AID, *Microenterprise Results Reporting*, Annual Report to Congress, Fiscal Year 2006 (June 2007).

Microcredit institutions provide loans for activities ranging from the processing and sale of food, the brewing of beer, and the production of a variety of crafts, to petty trade in other items and the provision of services to affluent households as well as larger businesses. Many of the credit institutions provide other useful services as well, such as providing technical information and offering workshops on what kind of business to start and how to run it, as well as some on broader topics related to improving literacy and health. Participants in such programs have an opportunity to share information and learn from one another.[108]

Studies on the impact of microcredit provide substantial evidence that the income of the women who were able to borrow these meager amounts rose perceptibly, and recent evidence further points to positive returns to the accompanying technical and social support assistance as well.[109] Among other encouraging effects, wives' participation in such programs has the added benefit of increasing their bargaining power in the family, and perhaps most important, leading to higher aspirations for their children's education.[110]

Even so, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the favorable effects of these programs or to ignore the reservations of critics. One of these points out that "most studies of microfinance programs have drawn their conclusions exclusively from successful borrowers in large, mature, and successful programs."[111] Also, a surprisingly large proportion of eligible women do not choose to participate in such programs. Further, some observers question whether shifting a part of the microcredit funds toward the poorest is the best allocation of limited resources because members of this group are likely to have greater difficulties in starting a successful enterprise than those in "near" poverty. Finally, the same group pressures that have been so successful in assuring high repayment rates can create serious hardships for women who have difficulty meeting these obligations.[112] Therefore, microcredit should not be viewed as a panacea for either poverty or women's inferior status. At the same time, any program that succeeds in mitigating the dire destitution and powerlessness of many women and helps to give their children a start toward a better life should not be heedlessly discarded, but should rather be seen as a useful first step toward solving these serious problems.

GENITAL MUTILATION AND PATRIARCHAL TRADITIONS

For some years, a rising tide of condemnation of the age-old practice of genital cutting of women has echoed from the podiums of United Nations assemblies in Vienna, Cairo, and Beijing. A host of individual countries, including the United States, have also condemned this practice. Genital cutting is frequently referred to as *female circumcision*, but is in fact far more drastic than that term implies. It dates back about

[108] Signe-Mary McKernan, "The Impact of Microcredit Programs on Self-Employment Profits: Do Noncredit Program Aspects Matter?" *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 84, no. 1 (February 2002): 93–115.
[109] For discussions of impacts, see, for instance, Amendariz de Aghion and Morduch, *The Economics of Microfinance;* and McKernan, "The Impact of Microcredit Programs."
[110] Simeen Mahmud, "Actually How Empowering Is Microcredit?" *Development and Change* 34, no. 4 (September 2003): 577–605; and Panjaitan-Driodisuryo and Cloud, "Gender, Self-Employment and Microcredit Programs."
[111] Michael J. V. Woolcock, "What Unsuccessful Cases Tell Us About How Group-Based Programs Work," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 58, no. 1 (January 1999): 17–42. Quote is from p. 36.
[112] These various criticisms are raised in Timothy G. Evans, Alayne M. Adams, Rafi Mohammed, and Alison H. Norris, "Demystifying Nonparticipation in Microcredit: A Population-Based Analysis," *World Development* 27, no. 2 (February 1999): 419–30; McKernan, "The Impact of Microcredit Programs on Self-Employment"; Celia W. Dugger, "Debate Stirs over Tiny Loans for World's Poorest," *New York Times*, April 29, 2004; and Aminur Rahman, "Microcredit Initiatives for Equitable and Sustainable Development: Who Pays?" *World Development* 27, no. 1 (January 1999): 67–82.

2,000 years and continues to be widespread in some parts of the world. It is, unfortunately, one more indication of the strength of patriarchal tradition and of women's subservient status in the 28 countries where it is practiced.* It is most prevalent among Muslims but is also common among Christians and followers of traditional African religions; it most generally occurs among the illiterate, but it is by no means unknown among those with some education, nor among emigrants from countries where the practice was traditionally practiced. The proportion of women subjected to cutting ranges from 6 in 1,000 in Uganda to over 90 out of 100 women in six countries, including Egypt, Mali, and Somalia. In these countries, the practice is deeply entrenched and even accepted by a substantial number of women. At the same time, there is increasing awareness that women who are cut suffer excruciating pain, because the operation is usually performed without any kind of anesthetic and that they are deprived of normal sexual pleasure for the remainder of their lives. There are also reports that suggest that they frequently experience complicated deliveries, and even that some die as a result of this procedure.

Public interest in the United States was first aroused by the story of Fauziya Kassindja, who arrived in this country on December 17, 1994, after fleeing her native Togo to avoid forced genital cutting.** As it turned out, she spent more than a year in prison before a precedent-setting decision by the highest administrative tribunal in the immigration system reversed the decision of an immigration judge who had dismissed her story because he did not believe it and considered it irrational. As a result of publicity about this case and growing social awareness of the problem, support for action on this matter grew, and in 1995 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) introduced guidelines that advise asylum officers that gender-based persecution is a valid ground for asylum. Further, in 1996 Congress outlawed the practice of genital cutting in the United States. Still, this issue is not fully resolved. Advocates for refugees and some members of Congress remain adamant that current INS guidelines for those seeking asylum in the United States are insufficient because judges continue to have discretion over whether to grant asylum.

One particularly vocal opponent of genital cutting is former supermodel Waris Dirie, who spent her early life as a nomad in Somalia and was herself subjected to genital mutilation. In addition to serving as a Special U.N. Ambassador on this issue, she coauthored a book titled *Desert Flower: The Extraordinary Journey of a Desert Nomad* that tells of her horrifying experience. Indeed, a growing awareness that genital mutilation is a form of violence against women led half of the 28 countries where it was widely practiced to take action to ban this practice, though it remains to be seen whether these governmental actions will substantially reduce the practice. Another critical step is for economically advanced countries to follow suit and impose a ban so that this practice is not further perpetuated by migrants from these countries. Such countries where genital mutilation is banned include the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as many, though not all, countries in Western Europe.***

*The figures in this inset are from the World Health Organization, *Eliminating Gender Mutilation: An Interagency Statement* (Geneva: WHO, 2008). For more details regarding this practice, see Tina Rosenberg, "Mutilating Africa's Daughters: Laws Unenforced, Practices Unchanged," *New York Times*, July 5, 2004; Waris Dirie and Catherine Miller, *Desert Flower: The Extraordinary Journey of a Desert Nomad* (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1998); and Sara Corbett, "A Cutting Tradition: Inside a Female-Circumcision Ceremony for Young Muslim Girls," *New York Times Magazine*, January 20, 2008, pp. 45–52.

**Celia W. Dugger, "A Refugee's Body Is Intact but Her Family Is Torn," *New York Times*, September 11, 1996, pp. A1, B6–B7; and Celia W. Dugger, "Woman Betrayed by Loved Ones Mourns a Double Loss," *New York Times*, September 11, 1996, p. B7.

***World Health Organization, "Female Genital Mutilation—New Knowledge Spurs Optimism," in *Progress in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research*, No. 72 (2006).

Summary on Women and Economic Development

Women in developing countries continue to face tremendous challenges, but at the same time it would be a mistake to overlook the tremendous progress made over the last several decades. As we emphasized, the gender gap in schooling continues to decline with the growing recognition, both by individual governments and international organizations, that resources devoted to the advancement of women have a greater payoff than many other types of investments, and that economic growth is more rapid when gender inequality is reduced. Therefore, the emphasis of development policies may be expected to further shift in this direction. Further, women have been gaining greater control over their own fertility. Looking forward, it is important to keep in mind that women's empowerment depends not only on policies that directly facilitate women's entry into the labor market but also on policies that encourage overall economic development.

COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER SOVIET BLOC

The economies of the countries that were formerly part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that were part of the "Soviet bloc" have undergone a major transition in the last 20 years.[113] The transition began with Lech Walesa and his union movement in Poland in the middle of the 1980s, followed by the "Velvet Revolution" in Czechoslovakia, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and finally the dissolution of the USSR shortly thereafter. These countries shifted from an economic system of central planning and public ownership of resources, to a market system with largely private ownership. Perhaps not surprisingly, the speed and manner of these changes varied considerably.[114] Today, these **transition economies** continue to face challenges that are more or less unique to them, much as developing countries did many years after colonialism ended.

During the time of the dominance of the USSR, its government and those of its satellites officially subscribed to Marxist ideology, including Marxist views concerning the role of women. The leaders of the Communist revolution in Russia at the end of World War I, whose ideas initially dominated the USSR, espoused the notion that the abolition of private property and class structure is both necessary and sufficient for achieving equality between women and men. Consistent with these views, they initially struck down all legal discrimination against women, mandated equal treatment of men and women in the educational system and in the labor market, introduced family laws that made the marriage contract egalitarian, and not only legalized abortion, but made it readily available. Although legislation concerning abortion was later modified,[115] in other respects the dominant ideology of the Soviet bloc remained unchanged as long as the USSR lasted.

Because, for the most part, there was not only full employment but often a labor shortage, doctrinal belief in labor force participation of women was reinforced by the

[113] In addition to Russia, the USSR included Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The Soviet Bloc included the USSR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Hungary, the German Democratic Republic (now part of Germany), Poland, Romania, and for some time, Albania. The former Yugoslavia was also a communist state in this region, though not officially part of the Soviet Bloc.

[114] For more information on the economic transition in the various countries, see Jan Svejnar, "Transition Economies: Performance and Challenges," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 3–28; and Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman, "A Normal Country: Russia After Communism," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 151–74.

[115] During the Stalinist period abortions were made illegal, and later, when there was concern about the low birth rate, pronatalist policies were introduced.

need for them in order to achieve the rapid industrialization that was the main goal of the regime. For the same reason, however, little progress was made in "socializing housework," although, as mentioned in the brief discussion of Marxist views of the family in Chapter 3, this was the solution the Soviets proposed for women's "double burden."

In practice, however, much housework still needed to be done. Although good child care was provided, at least for children 3 years of age and older,[116] housekeeping was, for the most part, more demanding than in capitalist countries. There were frequently long lines in stores where necessities had to be purchased, and many of the appliances middle-class households in economically advanced countries have long taken for granted were often not available. Women were told that these problems would be taken care of as soon as higher-priority goals had been achieved but that day never came. Thus, housekeeping continued to be a major burden, and one that rested squarely on the shoulders of women. Although women were now expected to be workers as well as homemakers, there was no equivalent recognition that men could be homemakers as well as workers, and sharing of household responsibilities was never part of the official ideology. Data from the 1980s, the last decade of the Soviet Union, show that despite women's high rates of labor market activity, women still spent 2.3 times as much time on housework as men, a figure slightly higher than that for the United States during the same period.[117]

The results of this mixed situation were, inevitably, also mixed. On the one hand, the status of women was clearly better than it had been in earlier days, and in some respects it compared favorably with that of women in the economically advanced countries in the West. For instance, women's labor force participation rate of nearly 80 percent was well in excess of the rates in most economically advanced countries.[118] Also, occupational segregation declined, and both the amount and the kind of education women received more nearly approximated that of men. On the other hand, women still continued to be concentrated in low-status, low-paying occupations, as well as in lower levels of the hierarchies within occupations, and the earnings gap appeared to be within the same range as that in market economies.[119] Nor did women succeed in penetrating the top echelons of the powerful government hierarchy.

Thus, the Marxist solution to "the woman question" left something to be desired, even in principle, and was far from satisfactory in practice. Consequently, most women in the Soviet orbit came to see their greater participation in paid work not as a right but rather as an obligation dictated by an oppressive regime and, in the satellite countries, one that was imposed by a foreign power. By the same token, many women came to have an idealized view of the family as a refuge from the harsh realities of a world that was not of their own making.

The cataclysmic events that culminated in the end of Soviet domination in Central and Eastern Europe and then subsequently the dissolution of the Soviet Union ushered in a new political and economic era. It was widely assumed that many women would retreat to their more traditional roles as homemakers and that women's labor force participation would decline substantially, all the more so because of higher unemployment rates, cuts in public child care, and in many cases, the failure of governments to enforce

[116] For further information see Tatyana Teplova, "Welfare State Transformation, Childcare, and Women's Work in Russia," *Social Politics* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 284–322.
[117] Figures are from Thomas Juster and Frank P. Stafford, "The Allocation of Time: Empirical Findings, Behavioral Models, and Problems of Measurement," *Journal of Economic Literature* 29 (June 1991): 477.
[118] Elizabeth Brainerd, "Women in Transition: Changes in Gender Wage Differentials in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 54, no. 1 (October 2000): 138–62.
[119] For a comparison of women's earnings and labor market activity before and shortly after the economic transition, see UNICEF, "Women in Transition," Chaps. 2 and 3. For evidence from earlier years, see Jacob Mincer, "Inter-Country Comparisons of Labor Force Trends and of Related Developments: An Overview," in *Trends in Women's Work, Education, and Family Building*, edited by Richard Layard and Jacob Mincer, *Journal of Labor Economics* 3, no. 1, pt. 2 (January 1985).

women's right to have their jobs held open during maternity and child care leaves. In fact, data from 1990 (around the start of the transition) through 2004 indicate that although women's labor force participation rates declined somewhat more than men's in some of these countries, no "tectonic shift" occurred in the gender ratio in participation rates.[120]

Many families in the transition economies also face new challenges trying to balancing paid work and family because of the shift from public enterprises to private firms. In Russia, for instance, there has been a "practical collapse" in the number of public child care centers, combined with very little privately provided child care.[121] Further some private firms are hiring women using "informal contracts" to avoid the costs of social benefit programs, while others may be avoiding hiring women altogether.[122] At least partly related to the changing economic structure and instability, and also perhaps due to changes in family policies, fertility rates have fallen well below the replacement-rate level in virtually all of the countries of the former Soviet bloc.[123] Another notable demographic change is the fall in life expectancy for women and men in Russia, along with some of the other countries in this region. In this regard, men have borne a disproportionate negative impact, largely attributed to rising rates of alcoholism and the consequences of stress.[124]

The effect of economic restructuring on the gender wage ratio has varied widely in the countries of the former Soviet bloc. Women in Russia and the Ukraine experienced a decline in their wages relative to men's, largely as a result of widening wage inequality in these countries while women in Central and East European countries (e.g., the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland) fared considerably better. Wage inequality also widened in these countries, but it appears that the gender earnings ratio increased because of the rise in the return to women's labor market skills.[125] In East Germany, however, the increase in the gender earnings ratio came at the expense of women's reduced employment.[126] In sum, this varied evidence suggests that it would be a mistake to try to generalize about how women are faring over the course of the economic transition.

For a long time, feminist movements fared poorly in these countries mainly because they shared the goal of equality in the labor market with the Communist regimes. Increasingly, however, women in the countries of the former Soviet bloc, particularly highly educated professional women, are coming to recognize to what extent they share the same problems that feminists struggle with in the rest of the world, and particularly in economically advanced countries.[127] This process has been hastened by the entry of nine

[120] Quoted phrase is from UNICEF, "Women in Transition," p. 26 regarding the period of 1990 through the late 1990s. Data for a longer period, 1990 to 2004 yield a similar conclusion. See UNIFEM, "The Story Behind the Numbers." See also Marni Lazreg, ed., *Making the Transition Work for Women in Europe and Central Asia* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000); and Pierella Paci, *Gender in Transition* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002).
[121] Quoted material is from Teplova, "Welfare State Transformation," p. 292. The particularly serious difficulties of single mothers are discussed in Judith Record McKinney, "Lone Mothers in Russia: Soviet and Post-Soviet Policy," *Feminist Economics* 10, no. 2 (July 2004): 37–60.
[122] Tatyana Teplova and Frances Woolley, "Balancing Work and Care in the Post-Soviet Russian Labor Market, Carleton University Working Paper (April 2005).
[123] Exceptions are a few Central Asian nations, including Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan.
[124] World Bank, *Millennium Development Goals: Progress and Prospects in Europe and Central Asia* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005); and Elizabeth Brainerd and David M. Cutler, "Autopsy on an Empire: Understanding Mortality in Russia and the Former Soviet Union," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 107–30. For trends, see World Bank, *World Bank Indicators*.
[125] Brainerd, "Women in Transition: Changes in Gender Wage Differentials." For evidence on changes in the gender gap unadjusted for human capital and other factors, see UNIFEM, "The Story Behind the Numbers."
[126] Jennifer Hunt, "The Transition in East Germany: When Is a Ten-Point Fall in the Gender Wage Gap Bad News?" *Journal of Labor Economics* 20, no. 1 (January 2002): 148–68.
[127] See articles on "Feminist and Economic Inquiry in Central and Easter Europe," edited by Marianne A. Ferber and Edith Kuiper, *Feminist Economics* 10, no. 3 (November 2004): 81–118.

countries of the former Soviet bloc into the European Union (EU), further linking the interests of women who formerly lived under different regimes.[128] Notably, many women's groups in the countries of the former Soviet bloc have been agitating against restrictions on the right to abortions and have been putting up stiff resistance against the elimination of such family-friendly policies as child care and generous paid maternity leave.[129]

COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

The countries of the Middle East and North Africa vary considerably as a consequence of their diverse history and experiences as well as due to differences in their natural resources, culture, government, and religion.[130] Thus, it is to be expected that the status of women and economic opportunities for women and men within this region differ as well. Therefore, care must be taken when making sweeping generalizations about patterns in this region.

Some of the countries in the region have colonial legacies while others do not. For instance, Syria and Lebanon were previously under French control and Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt have a British legacy. Turkey, on other hand, remained independent. Some have a history of hereditary rulers, such as the Saudi royal family, while others have experienced a variety of political regimes, notably Iran, including monarchy and most recently an Islamic Republic.

Similarly, resources vary considerably among these countries. Many, though not all of the nations in this region, have considerable reserves of oil and gas as well as other natural resources. Oil has made some of them among the richest nations in the world, such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, including the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Kuwait. However, economic growth of these countries has, for the most part, been unbalanced with a primary focus on extractive industries. Other countries, among the most populous in the region, such as Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia lack such natural resources.[131] Israel, a Jewish state, also located in this region, is a high-income country with a highly diversified economy. It is fairly similar to other economically advanced countries in other regions of the world. Thus, here we focus on the other countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

[128] These countries are Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. Countries joining the EU are expected to "harmonize" their policies, including those regarding gender equality. See Nicholas Barr, ed. *Labor Markets and Social Policy: The Accession and Beyond* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005).

[129] See Marianne A. Ferber and Edith Kuiper, "Introduction" and other contributions, in "Exploration in Feminist and Economic Inquiry in Central and Easter Europe," edited by Marianne A. Ferber and Edith Kuiper, *Feminist Economics* 10, no. 3 (November 2004): 81–118.

[130] The Middle East is typically defined to include Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen. See, for instance, World Bank, *World Development Indicators* (2007); and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi and Mary Mederios Kent, "Challenges and Opportunities—The Population of the Middle East and North Africa," *Population Bulletin* 62, no 2 (June 2007). Jennifer Olmsted suggests that the term *Middle East* is a legacy of the colonialist period and that "Southwest Asia" would be better. See Olmsted, "Economic History, Middle East and North Africa," in *The Elgar Companion to Feminist Economics*, edited by Janice Peterson and Margaret Lewis (Cheltenham, UK and Northhampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, 1999), pp. 219–26. This section draws on Nikki R. Keddie, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Roudi-Fahimi and Kent, "Challenges and Opportunities."

[131] Karen Pfeifer and Marsha P. Posusney, "Arab Economies and Globalization: An Overview," in *Women and Globalization in the Arab Middle East*, edited by Eleanor A. Doumato and Marsha P. Posusney (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 25–54. See also Tarik M. Yousef, "Development, Growth and Policy Reform in the Middle East and North Africa," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 91–116.

The countries in the Middle East and North Africa are predominantly Islamic (with the obvious exception of Israel), although religion in the region is not entirely monolithic, not even among people who classify themselves as Arabs.[132] Some Islamic countries are predominantly Shia, while others are Sunni, and in Lebanon about 40 percent of the population is Christian. One common feature of virtually all of the countries in the region is the growth in political Islam since the 1970s. This development is generally attributed to their history as colonies of Western countries, and more recently also to their high rates of unemployment and a lack of economic opportunities, as well as to "growing hostility to the West and to Israel."[133] Most notably, Iran became an Islamic Republic in 1979 after the overthrow of the Shah, and recently, Hamas, an Islamic group, won a majority in the 2006 election in Gaza.

In most of the predominately Muslim countries, laws governing marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance follow Islamic law to a greater or lesser extent. These laws, like orthdox Jewish and fundamentalist Christian laws, restrict women's rights. Turkey, Tunisia, and since 2004, Morocco, are important exceptions, and have family (personal status) laws that are much more favorable to women.[134] Regarding the recent legal changes in Morocco, Valentine Moghadam and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi write: "The Moroccan case is a striking example of how women's rights advocates can build coalitions to generate social dialogue, affect key policy debates, help reform laws, and change public policy."[135] They also note another positive sign in this regard, namely that a majority of the countries in the Middle East and North Africa regions have now ratified the United Nations CEDAW. Nevertheless, most of these countries signed with reservations that limit its potential to change women's status.

Given this considerable diversity, it is not surprising that women's economic progress in the region is mixed. Female illiteracy rates remain high as compared to many regions of the world, not only compared to the economically advanced countries where rates are generally less than 2 percent, but also compared to all but the poorest developing countries in the rest of the world. Nevertheless, rates have fallen considerably since 1980. For instance, in the developing countries of the Middle East and North Africa region, the female illiteracy rate declined from 72 to 39 percent between 1980 and 2006. Generally, female illiteracy rates in the region are lower in the higher-income countries, including Israel and Kuwait, though a notable exception is Saudi Arabia, where the rate stands at 31 percent.[136] Fertility has also substantially decreased in virtually all Middle East countries, partly related to increases in women's educational attainment, but perhaps even more because of increased access to health care and birth control.[137] A few of these countries even have a fertility rate below or near replacement level.

[132] Further not all of the countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, excluding Israel, are members of the League of Arab States. Neither Iran nor Turkey is a member. On the other hand, Sudan and Mauritania are examples of countries that are members of the Arab League but are not included in the Middle East and North Africa region. See http://www.britannica.com.

[133] See Keddie, "Women in the Middle East," p. 106 and pp. 160–165. See also, Suha Sabbagh, ed. "Introduction: The Debate on Arab Women," in *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1996).

[134] Valentine M. Moghadam and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, "Reforming Family Laws to Promote Progress in the Middle East and North Africa," *MENA Policy Brief* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau), December 2005.

[135] Moghadam and Roudi-Fahimi, "Reforming Family Laws," p. 6.

[136] Marianne A. Ferber and Michael Brun, "Men's and Women's Literacy Rates in Developing Countries," Working Paper, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2008). See also Jennifer Olmsted, "Gender, Aging and the Evolving Arab Patriarchal Contract," *Feminist Economics* 11, no. 2 (July 2005): 53–78.

[137] World Bank, "Gender in Mena," *Sector Brief* (Washington, DC: World Bank), 2007; and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, "Islam and Family Planning," *MENA Policy Brief* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau), 2004.

However, women's labor force participation in the countries of this region is still lagging, although it has increased in some instances. Although the religion of Islam and the generally patriarchal nature of the society in many of these countries (the prohibition in Saudi Arabia against women driving provides a notable example) are among the reasons typically cited,[138] they are likely not the sole causes. For one, there are other countries with large Islamic populations, such as Indonesia, with substantially higher rates of female labor force participation than in most countries in the Middle East and North Africa. As shown in Table 12-1, women's labor force participation rate stood at 53 percent in Indonesia, as compared with the average for the developing countries in the Middle East and North Africa of 32 percent.[139] Another explanation that has been proffered is the often unbalanced nature of the economic growth occurring in the region. Extractive industries, such as oil, minerals and gas, which dominate many of the economies of the Middle East, tend to offer women fewer employment opportunities than are provided by countries with a more balanced economic structure. Also, men's higher incomes in the oil-rich countries reduce the economic incentive for women's employment.[140]

Even for those women who are in the labor force, employment in sectors other than agriculture remains quite low compared to that in other regions.[141] Moreover, those women who find employment outside of agriculture tend to be in jobs in the public sector. Thus, gender segregation by industry and occupation remains substantial.[142] Women, especially those with higher education, must also confront unemployment rates that considerably exceed those of men.[143] This lack of progress in employment represents lost economic opportunity because this valuable resource is not being put to its best use.[144] Women's participation in the political arena is also very low compared to other regions.

In sum, the evidence indicates that women's economic status in the Middle East and North Africa tends to lag behind women's progress in other regions. This generalization should not, however, lead us to overlook such progress that has occurred. For instance, family law has been liberalized in Morocco, and there are now even nonfamily arrangements to care for the elderly in some of these countries.[145] Also, women's educational attainment has risen, along with more modest increases in women's participation rates, though levels remain low, and fertility has been declining at least somewhat in most countries in the region.

[138] Olmsted, "Gender, Aging, and the Evolving Arab Patriarchal Contract."
[139] Jennifer Olmsted, "Reexamining the Fertility Puzzle in MENA," in *Women and Globalization in the Arab Middle East*, edited by Eleanor A. Doumato and Marsha P. Posusney (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 25–54.
[140] Olmsted, "Gender, Aging and the Evolving Arab Patriarchal Contract." In a related paper, Michael Ross argues that the oil-centered economies of the Middle East, which largely employ men, also inhibit progress toward equality for women because women's greater labor force participation would help to change their self-identity and ultimately lead to increased political power. See "Oil, Islam and Women," *American Political Science Review* 102, no. 1 (February 2008): 107–23.
[141] World Bank, "Gender in MENA," p. 107.
[142] Yousef, "Development, Growth and Policy Reform"; Valentine M. Moghadam, "Women, Work, and Economic Restructuring: A Regional Overview," in *The Economics of Women and Work in the Middle East and North Africa, Research in Middle East Economics*, vol. 4, edited by E. Mine Cinar (Amsterdam, New York and London: Elsevier Science, JAI, 2001); and Zafiris Tzannatos and Iqbal Kaur, "Women in the MENA Labor Market," in *Women and Globalization in the Arab Middle East*, edited by Eleanor A. Doumato and Marsha P. Posusney (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 55–72.
[143] World Bank, "Gender in MENA"; and Yousef, "Development, Growth and Policy Reform," p. 103.
[144] UNDP, *The Arab Human Development Report, 2005: Toward the Rise of Women in the Arab World*; and "Saudi King's Daughter Urges Including Women in Decisionmaking," *BBC Monitoring*, March 20, 2007.
[145] Olmsted, "Gender, Aging, and the Evolving Arab Patriarchal Contract."

Conclusion

In this chapter, we found that, outside the economically advanced countries and most of the countries of the former Soviet bloc, women generally have lower educational attainment than men. The gender difference is largest in many of the poorest developing countries and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Women also tend to earn less, are generally segregated into different occupations, and hold fewer government positions. International differences in these outcomes are the result of a variety of economic factors, as well as government policies, social custom, ideology, and religion. Women's status continues to be particularly precarious in many of the developing countries, but almost everywhere there has been some improvement.

We also discussed how government can play a crucial role in promoting education and women's participation in the labor market. In many of the developing countries, governments are making efforts to expand educational opportunity for women. In a number of economically advanced countries, notably the Nordic countries and particularly Sweden, governments have, with considerable success, used a variety of policies to encourage women's labor force participation, while also making it possible for them to take care of their families. Even there, the situation is still far from perfect, mainly because occupational segregation remains high and housework continues to be divided quite unequally. Nonetheless, our review leads us to be cautiously optimistic about the outlook for women throughout the world, and specifically about the possibility of government playing a constructive role in advancing their status.

Questions for Review and Discussion

1. To what extent are comparisons of women's labor force participation among various countries a reliable indicator of women's contributions to the standard of living in those countries?
2. As seen in Table 12-2, women's labor force participation rates in economically advanced countries vary considerably. What economic and noneconomic factors might help to explain this disparity?
3. What are some specific policies that might improve women's well-being in the poorest countries? What are the difficulties and challenges entailed in undertaking them?
4. How does the experience of women living in the United States, Sweden, and Japan compare in terms of the following?
   a. Labor force participation
   b. Occupational segregation
   c. Gender wage ratio
   d. Housework
5. Occupational segregation by sex in Sweden is very high, and yet it has the smallest gender earnings gap of any economically advanced country in the world. "Th proves that occupational segregation does not reduc women's earnings relative to the earnings of men. Evaluate the validity of this statement.
6. A number of countries have policies intended t encourage people to have larger families, while other offer inducements to reduce family size. Would yo favor either policy for the United States? Why or wh not?
7. It is widely believed that government investments i women's education result in societal as well as privat benefits. Discuss each. Such investments are particu larly important in developing countries. Why?
8. Some occupations are predominantly female in some countries and predominantly male in others. What factors might help to explain these differences?
9. Apart from religion, what other factors affect women's experiences and opportunities in the Middle East and North Africa?

Suggested Readings

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Key Terms

United Nations Millennium Summit *349*
developing countries *354*
polygyny *356*
brideprice *356*
CEDAW *362*
sex ratio *363*
missing women *363*
dowry *363*
family policies *364*
antidiscrimination legislation *365*
family leave *365*
wage-setting institutions *366*
comparable worth *374*
one-child policy *383*
child labor *384*
worst forms of child labor *384*
transition economies *389*

AUTHOR INDEX