

The 10 best countries to be a woman



There's still a long wait for women's equality, but some countries are moving faster than others.

Image: REUTERS/John Sibley

18 Dec 2018

Kate Whiting
Senior Writer, Formative Content

Progress on gender equality is slowing down. At the current rate of change, it's going to take 108 years to close the Global Gender Gap, which now stands at 68%. That adds eight years to the 2017 estimate, according to the World Economic Forum's annual [report](#).

The index was first published in 2006, as a framework for measuring gender disparities in countries by four subindexes: Economic Participation, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment.

This year, five new countries have been included - Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Oman, Sierra Leone, and Togo - bringing the total up to 149.

Extremely slow progress

Since 2006, the overall gender gap has reduced by 3.6% - but in 2018, there was only a 0.03% reduction, revealing "extremely slow progress".

But the general direction of travel is positive: of the 144 countries that were covered in 2017 and 2018, 89 have at least marginally closed their gender gap and 55 have regressed.

As the report states: "Although progress continues to proceed at a very slow pace... the fact that most countries are moving toward greater gender parity is encouraging and rewards the efforts of all policy-makers and practitioners across the world that work to achieve the UN's fifth Sustainable Development Goal: Gender equality."



rank	score
1. Iceland	0.858
2. Norway	0.835
3. Sweden	0.822
4. Finland	0.821
5. Nicaragua	0.809
6. Rwanda	0.804
7. New Zealand	0.801
8. Philippines	0.799
9. Ireland	0.796
10. Namibia	0.789

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2018, World Economic Forum
Note: *2018 rank out of 144 countries

Global Gender Gap 2018 - Top 10
Image: Global Gender Gap Report 2018, World Economic Forum

The top 10

Iceland tops the index for the 10th year in a row, having closed more than 85% of its overall gender gap. The top four countries are all Nordic nations: with Norway, Sweden and Finland coming second, third and fourth respectively.

And there's a new entry in the top 10 this year - Namibia has climbed three places to become the second sub-Saharan African country among leading the nations after Rwanda. In the first Gender Gap index in 2006, Namibia ranked 38th. By 2018 it's improved by more than 10%, having closed more than 79% of its overall gender gap.

Namibia's Health and Survival gap has been closed since 2013 and it ranks fifth for Political Empowerment, with a boost in the number of women in parliament.

One of the biggest success stories is Nicaragua, which has overtaken Rwanda to take fifth place this year - and has climbed all the way from 62nd in 2006. For the seventh year, it has the narrowest gender gap in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, having closed just over 80%.



Source: Global Gender Gap Index 2018.
Note: Population-weighted averages. Covers all 149 countries featured in the 2018 index.

Global Gender Gap Index 2018
Image: How the Global Gender Gap looks by subindex

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- [How to build a paradise for women. A lesson from Iceland](#)
- [This is why women must play a greater role in the global economy](#)
- [There really are no downsides to more female CEOs. Here's why](#)

Economics, politics and AI

Out of the subindexes, the Economic Opportunity gender gap is the one that will take the longest time to close completely: at 202 years. The glass ceiling persists with women still being overlooked for managerial or senior official roles. Where data is available, it reveals only a third (34%) of global managers are women.

In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, there's also a significant gender gap in AI professionals, with only 23% female, compared to 77% who are male, resulting with a yet to be closed gender gap of 70%.

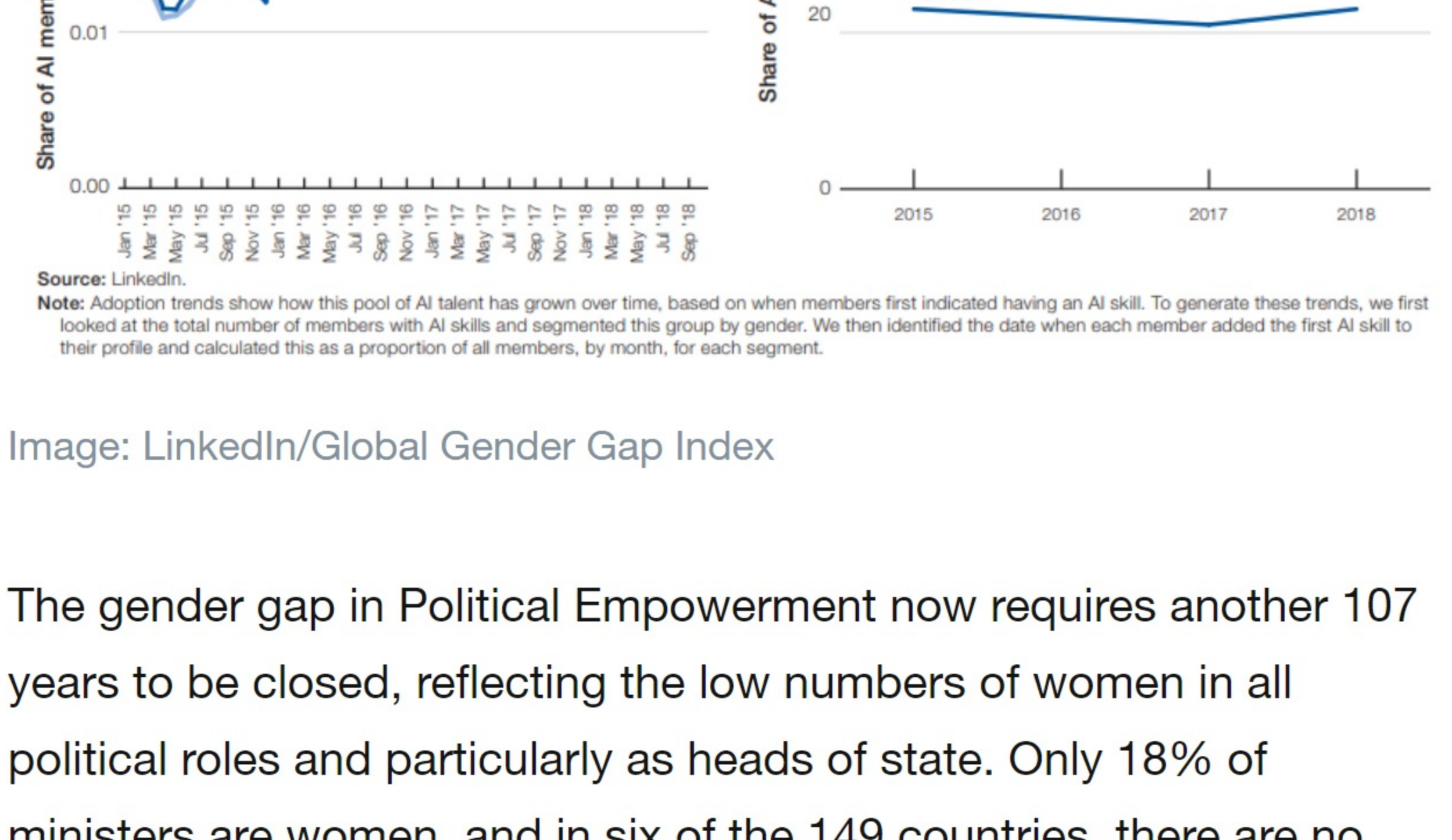


Image: LinkedIn/Global Gender Gap Index

The gender gap in Political Empowerment now requires another 107 years to be closed, reflecting the low numbers of women in all political roles and particularly as heads of state. Only 18% of ministers are women, and in six of the 149 countries, there are no women in ministerial positions at all.

The report states: "Most women in head-of-state positions have been elected in the past decade. Despite these recent developments, there are still just 17 women head of state or prime ministers across the 149 countries in 2018, including the prime minister of Romania who was elected this year."

But the good news is that the education-specific gender gap stands at just 5% on average and can be closed in just 14 years, based on current trends, while the Health and Survival gap can be considered "virtually closed in most countries".

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Written by

Kate Whiting, Senior Writer, Formative Content

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