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## Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion in the Philippines: Progress, challenges, and opportunities in SDG 5 and SDG 10

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## **Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion in the Philippines: Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities in SDG 5 and SDG 10**

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## Abstract

This study examines the Philippines' progress toward achieving gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion (GEDSI) through an examination of available data on analysis of Goals 5 (Gender Equality) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from 2015 to 2025. The research reveals substantial policy achievements alongside critical implementation gaps that undermine transformational potential, with intersecting forms of marginalization creating complex patterns of exclusion that require integrated policy responses.

Despite robust legal frameworks including the Magna Carta of Women and Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, significant inequalities persist for women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and marginalized groups across multiple dimensions of identity and experience. Using descriptive and intersectional analytics, Shapley decomposition, and intersectional analysis, the study combines quantitative data from national surveys with qualitative insights from stakeholder interviews to examine how gender, disability, ethnicity, and geography interact to shape development outcomes.

Key findings show notable advances in gender equality indicators but persistent challenges remain for persons with disabilities (12% of population aged 15+, with 15% female prevalence versus 9% male). Multiple identities intersect to create unique disadvantage patterns, with substantial regional disparities. Key findings reveal stark disparities across marginalized groups that demonstrate the inadequacy of single-identity approaches to inclusion. For persons with disabilities, severe disability prevalence varies dramatically by educational attainment, from 39% among those with no formal education (reaching 55% among women compared to 23% among men) to just 6% among college graduates. Ethnic variations are equally pronounced, with Waray speakers experiencing 21% overall disability prevalence, including 31% among women versus 11% among men. Indigenous Peoples (IPs) face compounded disadvantages through intersecting barriers: gender gaps in labor market participation are significantly larger among IPs and Muslim ethnic groups, with Indigenous women's engagement in unpaid family work more than three times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Educational exclusion reflects both ethnic and administrative barriers, as around 20% of Muslim ethnic groups and 10% of IPs lack birth registration, fundamentally limiting access to essential services. About half of Indigenous and Muslim ethnic groups did not progress beyond elementary school, compared to less than one-third among non-Indigenous peoples, while more than half remain concentrated in agriculture compared to 19% of non-IPs.

Intersectional analysis reveals that multiple identities create distinctive experiences of marginalization that cannot be understood through additive approaches. The research demonstrates that spatial inequalities often exceed ethnic disparities, while ethnic inequalities in education remain particularly pronounced and significantly correlated with poverty. The systematic exclusion of IPs creates what is referred to as "statistical invisibility," where IPs remain hidden in national statistics, constituting the first layer of social, economic, and political exclusion that undermines evidence-based policy development.

Critical implementation deficits center on the Gender and Development (GAD) budget crisis, system, where the mandatory 5% allocation has become compliance-oriented rather than transformational. Widespread fund misuse, weak accountability mechanisms, and institutional weakening of oversight bodies limit significantly limit intervention effectiveness of the GAD budget. Priority reforms include transforming GAD budgeting through outcome-based criteria,

restoring institutional architecture, strengthening enforcement mechanisms, and developing intersectional monitoring systems. Strategic interventions focus on legislative harmonization, capacity building, and anti-discrimination enforcement. Women with disabilities face compound marginalization through both stigma and infrastructure barriers, while rural women with disabilities encounter additional transport challenges that one-off programs fail to address.

The study's policy recommendations emphasize four priority reform areas that can collectively accelerate progress toward inclusive development. Legislative and regulatory reforms must harmonize existing laws with international standards, particularly regarding disability rights and indigenous peoples' protections. Budget and resource allocation reforms should transform GAD budgeting through outcome-based criteria while establishing community-controlled funding mechanisms that respect indigenous governance structures. Institutional capacity building requires systematic strengthening across all government levels, with mandatory GEDSI training for personnel and enhanced technical assistance for local government units. Data and monitoring system improvements must develop intersectional indicators, strengthen community-based monitoring mechanisms, and address the statistical invisibility of marginalized groups through systematic data collection and analysis.

This research provides evidence-based recommendations for addressing intersectional inequalities and accelerating progress toward inclusive development that ensures no one is left behind in achieving the 2030 SDGs. Through integrated policy interventions that recognize how multiple forms of disadvantage compound to create unique patterns of exclusion, transformational change that reaches the Philippines' most marginalized populations in pursuit of the 2030 SDGs is ensured.

**Keywords:** gender equality, disability inclusion, social inclusion, GEDSI, intersectionality, SDG5, SDG10, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, marginalized groups, multiple discrimination, intersectional analysis, statistical invisibility, compound marginalization, gender-responsive budgeting, GAD budget reform, institutional strengthening, legislative harmonization, community-controlled funding, inclusive development, Shapley decomposition, educational exclusion, labor market discrimination, ancestral domain rights, outcome-based budgeting, evidence-based policy

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## **1. Introduction**

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI), which we define in this study as

“the condition in which all persons have equal rights, equitable opportunities and fair treatments and protection to contribute to, and benefit from, economic, social, cultural and political development, regardless of factors like sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, age, ethnicity, religion, and, socio-economic status,”

represents one of the most fundamental challenges of our time, with profound implications for sustainable development and human dignity. This definition builds on established international human rights frameworks, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' principle that everyone is entitled to fundamental rights "without distinction of any kind" (UN General Assembly 1948), and aligns with contemporary inclusive development theory that emphasizes ensuring all individuals can "fully contribute to and benefit from economic growth and development" regardless of their background (Aspen Institute 2025). The definition's intersectional approach reflects WHO's recognition of "overlapping and intersecting factors of discrimination," while its comprehensive scope encompasses the indivisible nature of human rights across economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions (WHO 2023; UNFPA 2005).

In this global pursuit of GEDSI, the Philippines has emerged as a regional leader, particularly in demonstrating sustained commitment to gender parity that has earned international recognition and positioned the country as the top performer in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index shows the Philippines outperforming all ASEAN member states since 2006 despite recent volatility in global rankings. While this achievement reflects genuine progress in areas such as educational attainment and health outcomes, substantial challenges remain in economic participation and political empowerment. These challenges are particularly acute for women facing multiple forms of marginalization, including women with disabilities, indigenous women, and women from low-income households who experience compounded disadvantages that traditional gender equality metrics often fail to capture fully.

The country achieved its peak performance in 2013 (5th globally) and experienced its lowest ranking in 2024 (25th place) before recovering to 20th place in 2025 with a gender gap closure score of 78.1% (WEF 2025). This trajectory reflects both the Philippines' historical strengths in gender parity and the dynamic and sometimes reversible nature of gender equality progress.

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Data compiled by UN Women on SDG gender indicators reveals more nuanced challenges in achieving comprehensive gender equality. According to UN Women's country data, the Philippines scored 67.52 out of 100 in the 2024 SDG Gender Index, ranking 70th out of 139 countries—significantly lower than its WEF ranking and only slightly above the Asia-Pacific regional average of 66.48 (Equal Measures 2030, 2024). The Philippines demonstrates moderate progress in women's political participation, with women holding only a quarter (27.3%) of seats in the national parliament as of February 2024, indicating some legislative presence of women though still short of parity (UN Women 2024).

Critical gaps persist across multiple dimensions: only 55.6% of legal frameworks that promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality are in place, while 5.9% of women aged 15-49 reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partners in 2018 (UN Women 2024). This figure may underestimate the true prevalence due to underreporting, stigma, and limited access to support services for survivors. Reproductive health challenges remain significant, with only 56% of women having their family planning needs satisfied with modern methods as of 2017, and an adolescent birth rate of 47 per 1,000 women aged 15-19. Additionally, 9.4% of women aged 20-24 were married or in a union before age 18, pointing to the persistence of child marriage practices that require targeted intervention (UN Women 2024).

A major constraint in assessing progress is the substantial gender data gap, with only 48.3% of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective available as of December 2020. Aside from UN Women, the PSA (2023) also notes that out of 15 National SDG5 indicators, only 4 have sufficient data; 10 have insufficient data, and 1 has no data. Critical areas lacking adequate data include unpaid care and domestic work, key labor market indicators such as the gender pay gap, poverty among women, physical and sexual harassment in various settings, women's access to assets including land ownership, and the gendered impacts of environmental change (UN Women 2024). These data gaps underscore the challenges in developing evidence-based policies and tracking meaningful progress toward gender-related SDG commitments in the Philippines.

In summary, while the Philippines has achieved moderate gains in political participation and some areas of reproductive health, structural barriers and data limitations continue to hinder comprehensive gender equality. The contrasting assessments between WEF's focus on relative gender gaps and UN Women's emphasis on absolute progress toward SDG targets highlight the need for sustained policy commitment, greater investment in gender data systems, and inclusive programming that addresses intersectional challenges across all dimensions of gender equality.

The evolution of the Philippines' performance in both the SDG indicators and in the WEF assessment also represents progress in the sensitivity of gender equality monitoring. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) era where gender considerations were limited to education enrollment ratios, women's non-agricultural employment, and parliamentary representation, the current framework captures the complex intersectional challenges that continue to affect women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), indigenous peoples (IPs), and other vulnerable groups across Filipino society.

The global commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 has intensified focus on SDG5 (Gender Equality) and SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities), which serve as critical frameworks for measuring progress toward inclusive development. SDG5 encompasses nine specific targets addressing discrimination (5.1), violence (5.2), harmful

practices (5.3), unpaid care work (5.4), leadership participation (5.5), reproductive health (5.6), economic resources (5.a), technology access (5.b), and policy frameworks for gender equality (5.c). SDG10 focuses on income growth for the bottom 40 percent (10.1), social inclusion irrespective of various characteristics (10.2), equal opportunity and anti-discrimination (10.3), fiscal and social protection policies (10.4), financial regulation (10.5), international representation (10.6), migration (10.7), trade policies (10.a), development assistance (10.b), and remittance costs (10.c) (UN 2015).

The SDG framework reflect lessons learned from the more limited scope of the MDGs, which examined gender equality primarily through education, employment, and political representation indicators under MDG3. The Philippines, together with 192 other UN member states, has committed to ambitious SDG targets, recognizing that true development cannot be achieved while significant portions of the population remain excluded from economic, social, and political opportunities.

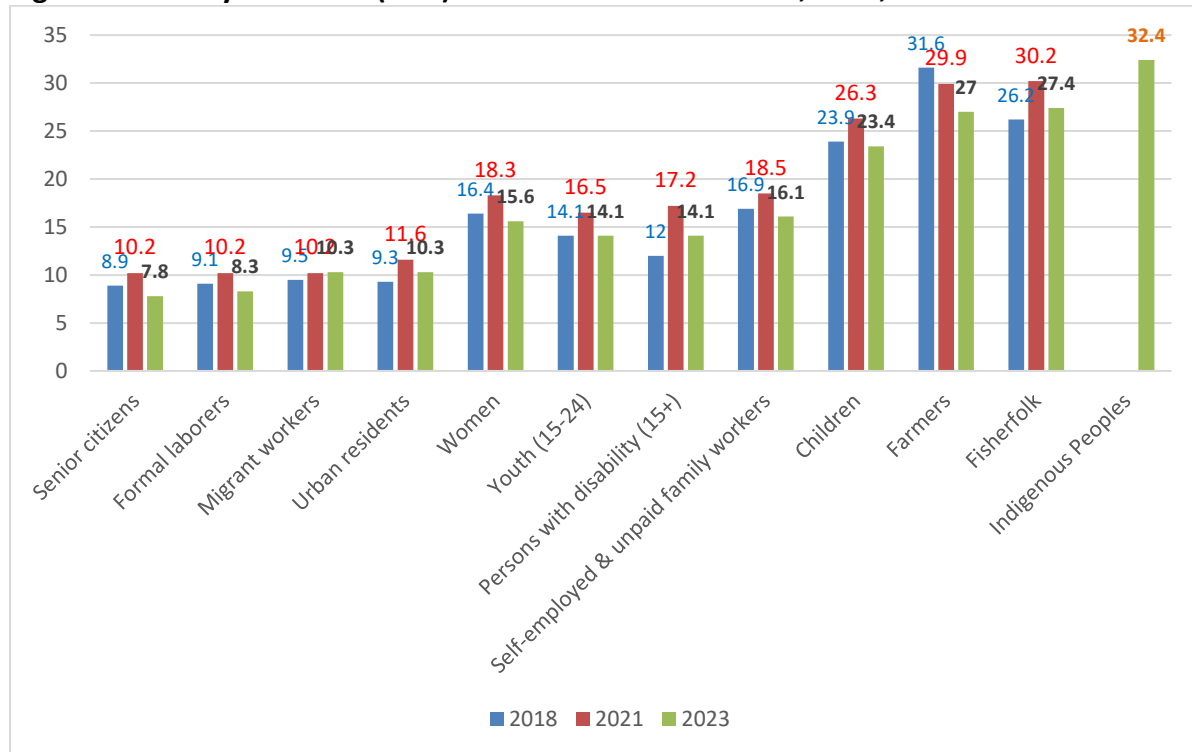
These SDG commitments build upon decades of international advocacy for gender equality, beginning with foundational instruments such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UN General Assembly Resolution 217A 1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights (both adopted 1966, entered into force 1976), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (adopted 1979, entered into force 1981). The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action further mobilized support for gender equality across twelve strategic areas, including the burden of poverty and inequality on women, educational and health inequalities, violence against women, conflict effects, economic inequality, power-sharing disparities, institutional mechanisms, human rights protection, media representation, environmental management, and discrimination against girl children (UN Women 1995).

Despite robust economic growth that has helped considerably reduce national poverty rates from 23.3 percent in 2015 to 16.7 percent in 2018 and further to 15.5 percent in 2023, high inequality of income and opportunities persists throughout Filipino society. The concentration of wealth remains stark, with the wealthiest ten percent of the population capturing 32 percent of national income while half of all income earners receive only 23 percent of national income, according to the 2023 Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES), conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). This concentration of economic resources limits equality of opportunity and impedes equitable public service delivery, which is necessary for inclusive human development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the development landscape, undermining notable progress in poverty reduction and creating new vulnerabilities for already marginalized groups. The pandemic severely tested the Philippines' development progress, pushing 2.8 million more Filipinos into poverty in 2021 and increasing poverty incidence to 18.1 percent, although the country has subsequently recovered from the pandemic and reduced poverty rate at 15.5 percent, as of 2023. According to the PSA (2025), poverty incidence among basic sectors in the Philippines rose sharply in 2021 amid the socioeconomic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, before easing by 2023 (**Figure 1**). For instance, poverty among senior citizens climbed from 8.9 % in 2018 to 10.2 % in 2021, but fell to 7.8 % in 2023; among formal laborers, the rate rose from 9.1 % in 2018 to 10.2 % in 2021, then dropped to 8.3 % in 2023. Similarly, migrant workers saw poverty increase from 9.5 % in 2018 to 10.2 % in 2021, before slightly improving to 10.3 % in 2023, while urban residents moved from 9.3 % in 2018 to 11.6 % in 2021, then down to 10.3 % in 2023. Despite these gains, deeply vulnerable groups such as

farmers (29.9 % in 2021 → 27.0 % in 2023), fisherfolk (30.2 % → 27.4 %), children (26.3 % → 23.4 %), and Indigenous Peoples (32.4 % in 2023) remain disproportionately affected by poverty. These patterns highlight that while recovery is underway, structural inequalities persist across sectors.

**Figure 1. Poverty incidence (in %) across basic sectors: 2018, 2021, 2023**



Source: PSA (2025)

Although the official poverty statistics do not reveal significant differences between women and men because the PSA measures official poverty at the household rather than the individual level (using per capita income), the work of Albert et al. (2024) indicates that women are poorer than men once intra-household resource sharing is taken into account. Women, PWDs, and IP communities have faced disproportionate impacts from pandemic-related restrictions and economic disruptions, highlighting the urgent need for more inclusive and resilient development approaches.

Current social assistance programs struggle to adequately reach the poorest and most marginalized groups in society. The conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, also called as *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps) currently provides assistance to 4.0 million households as cash transfer participants, yet approximately 20 million individual Filipinos live below the poverty line. Targeting errors mean that over 25 percent of beneficiaries come from the three highest wealth quintiles, while those most in need often lack access to essential services and support systems. A law on the 4Ps enacted in 2019 mandates that 4Ps household beneficiaries can only stay for a maximum of seven years, and recent analysis of data from both the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the PSA reveals that many households required to exit the program under the seven-year rule mandated by 2019 legislation were not adequately prepared for program exit (Kidd et al. 2025). This examination has prompted the current administration to suspend implementation and pursue legislative repeal of this requirement.

The implementation of comprehensive devolution policies, particularly the 2018 Mandanas-Garcia Supreme Court ruling and related Executive Order 138 (2021), is reshaping resource distribution and power dynamics throughout the country by broadening the share of Local Government Units (LGUs) of national taxes. This shift aimed to strengthen local accountability and service delivery, which are central to achieving the SDGs. In practice, however, the impact on SDG targeting and implementation has been mixed (Lubos et al. 2023). On one hand, devolution has created space for localized SDG initiatives, with some LGUs integrating SDG goals into their development and investment plans, particularly in health, education, and social protection. On the other hand, uneven LGU capacities—both in technical planning and financial management—have constrained the effective localization of SDG implementation. This risks widening regional inequalities, as well-resourced LGUs are better able to harness devolved funds for SDG-aligned programs, while weaker LGUs may struggle to deliver essential services for vulnerable groups.

PWDs and IPs face particularly complex challenges, often remaining systematically overlooked and under-served due to inadequate official data and limited evidence-informed program approaches. These groups encounter stigma and discrimination that result in deeper deprivation. The intersection of disability, ethnicity, and gender creates compounded stigma and discrimination that results in deeper levels of deprivation and social exclusion.

For IPs, gender inequalities also intersect with broader development challenges including forced displacement from ancestral lands, loss of traditional livelihoods, and severely limited access to basic services. These disruptions disproportionately affect Indigenous women and girls, who lose both economic opportunities and traditional sources of authority and protection within their communities.

The challenges facing PWDs are further complicated by systemic gaps in identification and support systems. Diagnosis of students with special needs tends to be delayed and underreported due to the shortage of development and health professionals, particularly in rural areas. This diagnostic gap means that disabilities often go unrecognized until later stages of development, limiting early intervention opportunities and perpetuating educational and economic exclusion.

This study addresses four critical policy questions that have emerged from these intersecting challenges. First, we examine how the Philippines has progressed on SDG5 and SDG10 indicators since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, assessing both quantitative achievements and qualitative improvements in lived experiences. Second, we investigate what intersectional barriers persist for women with disabilities, indigenous women, and other marginalized groups who face multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination. Third, we evaluate the effectiveness of current policies in addressing these multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusion. Finally, we explore what policy reforms could better address intersectional inequalities and promote more inclusive development outcomes.

The study employs an intersectional analytical framework that examines how gender, disability status, socioeconomic position, and other social identities interact to create unique patterns of disadvantage or opportunity. This approach recognizes that individuals do not experience discrimination based on single characteristics, but rather, face complex combinations of advantages and disadvantages that shape their access to resources, services, and opportunities throughout their lives. Central to this analytical approach is the application of Shapley decomposition methodology using PSA survey data to quantify the relative contributions of

various factors—including gender inequality, educational attainment disparities, regional variations, and other socioeconomic factors—to overall inequality patterns, providing a comprehensive foundation for understanding how different forms of marginalization intersect and compound across Philippine contexts.

## **2. Data and Methods**

This study employs a mixed-methods research design that combines quantitative assessment of SDG indicators with qualitative examination of lived experiences and policy implementation challenges. The methodological approach draws from established frameworks for GEDSI research, while adapting these approaches to the specific context of intersectional analysis in the Philippines.

### **2.1. Conceptual Framework**

The study employs an intersectional analytical framework examining how gender, disability status, and socioeconomic position interact to create unique patterns of disadvantage or opportunity. This framework recognizes that discrimination and exclusion operate through multiple, interconnected systems rather than single, isolated characteristics. The approach integrates quantitative analysis of multiple disadvantage indicators with qualitative assessment of lived experiences, policy effectiveness evaluation, and regional comparative analysis.

This study employs an integrated analytical framework that combines inequality decomposition methodology with descriptive data analytics, as well as intersectional analysis to move beyond sectoral examination toward understanding how multiple dimensions of marginalization interact to create and sustain disadvantage. The framework serves both as an analytical tool for understanding inequality patterns and as a guidepost for policy action that addresses systemic barriers while leveraging opportunities for inclusive development.

The analytical approach is anchored in Shapley decomposition methodology applied to merged Family Income and Expenditure Survey and Labor Force Survey (FIES-LFS) data covering 2018, 2021, and 2023, which quantifies the relative contributions of gender, education, geography, and income factors to overall inequality patterns. Building on this quantitative foundation, the framework examines data patterns across recent periods (2018-2023) to examine how inequality patterns evolve during crisis periods, with particular attention to how pandemic responses either exacerbated existing inequalities or created opportunities for more inclusive recovery. Spatial analysis recognizes that inequality manifests differently across Philippine regions, requiring place-based understanding of how national patterns interact with local contexts, particularly in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) where 37 percent of IPs reside (Pérez-Brito et al. 2024). Further, the descriptive data analytics makes use of an intersectional analytical lens, whenever possible, to examine how gender, disability status, indigenous identity, and socioeconomic position interact to create unique patterns of disadvantage or opportunity. This approach recognizes that discrimination and exclusion operate through multiple, interconnected systems rather than single, isolated characteristics, requiring analysis that captures how "intersecting inequalities compound to create distinctive experiences of marginalization that cannot be understood through additive approaches" (Crenshaw 1989; adapted for Philippine context).

This conceptual approach recognizes that inequality manifests across interconnected dimensions that must be analyzed systematically rather than separately. Drawing on established frameworks for integrating gender equality and social inclusion, the study examines how structural barriers (discriminatory laws, policies, and institutions), capability constraints (limited access to education, health, and economic resources), and agency limitations (restricted voice, choice, and control) interact across different identity categories to create complex patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

The framework adopts a dual analytical focus that simultaneously identifies systemic barriers perpetuating inequality, while mapping opportunities and entry points for transformative change. Barriers analysis examines how discriminatory practices, institutional exclusion, and resource constraints operate at individual, household, community, and structural levels. Opportunities analysis identifies protective factors, successful inclusion practices, and policy innovations that demonstrate pathways toward greater equality. This dual approach ensures that research findings translate into actionable recommendations rather than simply documenting disadvantage.

The conceptual framework builds on established theoretical foundations while incorporating recent advances in disability studies and indigenous rights frameworks. It recognizes disability as a universal experience that results from the interaction between impairments and environmental factors, grounded in the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health. For IP communities, the framework incorporates perspectives on historical injustice, cultural preservation, and self-determination that go beyond simple inclusion to address systemic patterns of marginalization rooted in colonization and ongoing structural discrimination.

The framework employs innovative mixed-methods integration that uses quantitative decomposition findings to guide qualitative data collection, while qualitative insights provide contextual understanding that enhances quantitative interpretation. Critically, this integrated approach serves not only as an analytical tool for understanding inequality patterns but also as a strategic framework for policy action. This integrated analytical framework transforms GEDSI research from descriptive documentation toward strategic analysis for transformative action, providing both the empirical foundation for understanding inequality patterns and the conceptual roadmap for addressing systemic barriers through coordinated policy interventions that recognize the interconnected nature of marginalization while leveraging opportunities for inclusive development.

## *2.2. Data Sources and Collection Methods*

Major data sources examined in this study include the SDG Watch Database maintained by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which serves as the official repository of National SDG indicators<sup>1</sup>. This comprehensive database provides baseline and progress data across all SDG targets, with particular attention to indicators related to gender equality and reduced inequalities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Philippines monitors SDG progress through a national framework of 155 indicators established by PSA Board Resolution No. 9, Series of 2017, comprising 102 global SDG indicators (from the 232 global indicators), 28 proxy indicators, and 25 supplemental indicators tailored to national circumstances.

The study draws extensively from multiple waves of national surveys to enable longitudinal analysis of GEDSI patterns. Primary quantitative data sources include the Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS) 2016, 2017, 2020, and 2022 datasets that provide consistent poverty and welfare indicators across different population groups. Labor Force Survey (LFS) data from multiple years enables examination of employment patterns, occupational segregation, and workforce participation across gender, disability status, and ethnic groups. Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) data provides detailed household economic information, while merged FIES-LFS datasets enable examination of working-age adults (15-64 years) across 258,922 observations in 2023, providing sufficient sample sizes for disaggregated analysis across ethnic groups, disability status, and geographic locations.

Demographic and health data comes from the 2017 and 2022 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), which provides critical indicators on teenage pregnancy patterns, reproductive health outcomes, and socioeconomic disparities in health access. The NDHS data enables analysis of trends in key gender equality indicators, particularly examining how teenage pregnancy rates vary by educational attainment, wealth quintile, and geographic location.

Disability-specific data draws from the National Disability Prevalence Survey (NDPS) and disability data from Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Education (DepEd) administrative records, providing insights into service access and educational inclusion patterns.

This study also utilizes results from the World Bank's Household Survey for Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines 2023, which was "developed with the objective to gather important data about IP populations in previously identified priority areas and close some of the country's data and information gaps" (Pérez-Brito et al. 2024, p. 6). This survey provides unprecedented granular data on household welfare patterns, living conditions, social cohesion, employment and livelihoods, access to services, and experiences of poverty and inequality of IPs. The Indigenous Peoples Household Survey fills critical data gaps identified in the "No Data, No Story" report, which documented how "IPs remain statistically hidden in the country, as they are not properly accounted for in national statistics" and how "the limited available evidence suggests that IPs remain among the poorest, most vulnerable, and marginalized populations in the country" (Pérez-Brito et al. 2024, p. 11). The survey provides essential data for examining intersectionality between ethnicity, poverty, and geography and enables analysis of horizontal inequalities across ethnic groups that was previously impossible due to data limitations.

The study also incorporates administrative data from major social insurance institutions including the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and Social Security System (SSS), providing insights into formal sector employment patterns, benefit coverage, and social protection access across different population groups. This administrative data enables examination of formal sector inclusion patterns and social insurance coverage gaps that particularly affect women, PWDs, and IPs who are often concentrated in informal employment.

Gender-disaggregated government statistics from multiple agencies examine sector-specific patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Administrative data from social protection programs includes beneficiary records from the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps), Modified Conditional Cash Transfer (MCCT) programs, and other DSWD-administered social assistance initiatives.

Regional comparative analysis incorporates data from the UN SDG Database (maintained by the UN Statistics Division)<sup>2</sup>, enabling assessment of Philippine progress relative to other countries, especially neighboring ones that are part of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN regional comparative data provides additional context for understanding how Philippine GEDSI outcomes compare with regional patterns and trends.

Qualitative data collection includes key informant interviews with government officials, civil society leaders, and representatives from organizations of PWDs and IPs. Focus group discussions with women from marginalized communities provide insights into lived experiences of intersectional discrimination and barriers to accessing services and opportunities. These qualitative components are essential for understanding the complex dynamics that quantitative indicators alone cannot capture. Primary qualitative data collection conducted between May and August 2025 includes Eight (8) focus group discussions with affected populations including women with disabilities, Indigenous women leaders, LGBTQ+ individuals, Disability groups, and rural women provide insights into lived experiences of intersectional discrimination and barriers to accessing services and opportunities.

### **2.3. Analytical Approaches**

The research combines longitudinal analysis of SDG indicator trends with geographic mapping of access patterns and assessment of intervention program effectiveness. Quantitative analysis employs both descriptive statistics and multivariate modeling to identify patterns of intersectional disadvantage and assess progress toward SDG targets. A key methodological innovation involves Shapley decomposition analysis using Family Income and Expenditure Survey-Labor Force Survey (FIES-LFS) merged data to quantify the relative contributions of various factors—including gender inequality, educational attainment disparities, regional variations, and other socioeconomic characteristics—to overall inequality patterns across Philippine regions. Time series analysis tracks changes in key indicators since 2015, while cross-sectional analysis examines disparities across different population groups and geographic regions.

Qualitative analysis employs thematic coding of interview and focus group transcripts to identify recurring patterns in experiences of discrimination, barriers to access, and effective intervention strategies. The analysis pays particular attention to how different forms of marginalization interact and compound each other, as well as identifying protective factors and resilience strategies employed by marginalized communities.

### **2.4. Ethical Considerations and Data Privacy**

The research adheres to strict ethical guidelines for research involving vulnerable populations, with particular attention to obtaining meaningful informed consent from participants with

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<sup>2</sup> The global SDG indicator framework has evolved from its original 232 unique indicators (UN General Assembly 2017) to 231 indicators following the 2020 comprehensive review (UN Statistical Commission 2020), and currently comprises 234 unique indicators after the 2025 comprehensive review (IAEG-SDGs 2025). The framework undergoes annual refinements by the UN Statistical Commission and comprehensive reviews every five years to improve methodological rigor and address data availability challenges (UN Statistics Division 2025).

disabilities and from IP communities. All data collection procedures<sup>3</sup> respect cultural protocols and traditional governance structures within IP communities.

Data privacy protections ensure that individual participants cannot be identified in research outputs, while aggregated data respects the collective rights of IP communities to control information about their populations. The research approach recognizes that data collection itself can be a form of empowerment when conducted in partnership with community organizations and when findings are shared back with participating communities in accessible formats.

## *2.5. Limitations and Methodological Considerations*

Several methodological limitations must be acknowledged in interpreting research findings. First, official statistics often under-represent marginalized populations due to geographic isolation, documentation barriers, and mistrust of government data collection processes. This is particularly problematic for IP populations and persons with disabilities who may be systematically excluded from standard survey methodologies.

Second, the intersection of multiple forms of marginalization creates challenges for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The Shapley decomposition analysis, while methodologically robust, requires adequate sample sizes across all relevant subgroups, which may limit the granularity of decomposition possible for highly marginalized intersectional categories. For quantitative components, small population subgroups (particularly women with disabilities from IP communities) limit robust statistical analysis.

For qualitative components, sample size determination followed the principle of thematic saturation rather than predetermined numerical targets. Data saturation was considered achieved when additional key informant interviews and focus group discussions ceased to generate new themes, insights, or substantially different perspectives on the research questions (Guest et al. 2006; Saunders et al. 2018). While this approach is methodologically sound for exploratory qualitative research, it means that some highly marginalized subgroups may remain underrepresented if saturation was reached before capturing their full range of experiences.

Third, rapid policy changes during the research period, particularly those related to devolution and pandemic response, make it challenging to isolate the effects of specific interventions from broader contextual factors. Additionally, the lack of formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval represents a methodological limitation, though all research activities adhered to ethical research principles including informed consent procedures, voluntary participation, confidentiality protections, and cultural sensitivity guidelines for working with IP and PWD communities.

Despite these limitations, the mixed-methods approach provides a robust foundation for understanding both broad patterns of inclusion and exclusion as well as the nuanced experiences of different marginalized communities throughout the Philippines. The combination of quantitative trend analysis and qualitative thematic saturation allows for

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<sup>3</sup> This study did not undergo formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) review. However, all research activities adhered to ethical research principles including: Informed verbal/written consent from all participants; Voluntary participation with right to withdraw; Confidentiality and anonymity protections; Data security protocols; Cultural sensitivity guidelines for working with indigenous and disability communities

triangulation of findings while acknowledging the inherent challenges in researching intersectional marginalization.

### **3. Review of Literature**

#### **3.1. *International Frameworks and Historical Context***

The contemporary focus on gender equality and social inclusion within the SDG framework represents the culmination of decades of international advocacy and standard-setting. The foundational human rights instruments established the normative framework for equality and non-discrimination, beginning with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UN General Assembly 1948) and extending through the International Bill of Human Rights, which includes the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights (both adopted 1966, entered into force 1976).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted in 1979 and entering into force in 1981, provided the most comprehensive international legal framework specifically addressing women's rights and gender equality (UN 1979). CEDAW established binding obligations for state parties to eliminate discrimination and promote substantive equality across all spheres of life, creating the foundation upon which subsequent gender equality initiatives would build.

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing marked a watershed moment in global gender advocacy, with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action calling for strategic action across twelve critical areas of concern (UN Women 1995). These areas encompassed the burden of poverty and inequality on women, educational and health inequalities, violence against women, conflict impacts, economic inequality, power-sharing disparities, institutional mechanisms, human rights protection, media representation, environmental management, and discrimination against girl children. The Beijing Platform for Action established ambitious targets and strategies that continue to influence gender equality programming three decades later.

The MDGs, adopted in 2000 with a target date of 2015, represented the first systematic attempt to mainstream gender into global development goals, though their approach was relatively narrow compared to contemporary frameworks (UN 2000). The MDGs comprised eight global goals supported by 21 specific, time-bound, and quantifiable targets, monitored through 60 global statistical indicators using 1990 baseline data. However, the MDGs were criticized for compartmentalization, with no explicit recognition of linkages and interdependence among goals. MDG3 on promoting gender equality and empowerment of women focused on three narrow areas: education as measured by girl-to-boy enrollment ratios, employment through women's share in non-agricultural wage employment, and political participation via women's parliamentary representation. While MDG5 on maternal health complemented gender equality objectives, other goals lacked explicit gender considerations despite their significance for women's development outcomes.

The SDG framework reflects lessons learned from the more limited scope of the MDGs by adopting a more comprehensive and intersectional approach to gender equality and social inclusion. SDG5 encompasses nine specific targets addressing discrimination, violence, harmful practices, unpaid care work, leadership participation, reproductive health, economic

resources, technology access, and policy frameworks. SDG10 focuses on reducing inequalities through income growth for the bottom 40 percent, social inclusion irrespective of various characteristics, equal opportunity and anti-discrimination measures, and improved fiscal and social protection policies (UN 2015). This expanded framework recognizes the interconnected nature of different forms of marginalization and the need for integrated approaches to achieving inclusive development.

Many SDG5 and a few SDG10 targets comprise multiple indicators reflecting the complexity of gender equality measurement, with varying levels of methodological development (**Box 1**). For example, Target 5.5 on women's leadership participation includes both the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments (Indicator 5.5.1) and the proportion of women in managerial positions (Indicator 5.5.2). Beyond SDG5 and SDG10, various other SDGs (including SDG1 on poverty, SDG2 on hunger, SDG3 on health, and SDG4 on education) provide lenses on GEDSI, particularly regarding women's economic empowerment and vulnerable peoples' access to services for improving human capabilities.

<b>Box 1. Targets for SDG5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") and SDG10 ("Reduce inequality within and among countries") and indicators for monitoring these targets</b>	
Target 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	Indicator 5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and nondiscrimination on the basis of sex
Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	Indicator 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
	Indicator 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	Indicator 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
	Indicator 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation, by age
Target 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	Indicator 5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for	Indicator 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments

leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	Indicator 5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions
Target 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	Indicator 5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
	Indicator 5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
Target 5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	Indicator 5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
	Indicator 5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women’s equal rights to land ownership and/or control
Target 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	Indicator 5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
Target 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	Indicator 5.c.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment
Target 10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average	Indicator 10.1.1 Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population
Target 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status	Indicator 10.2.1 Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by sex, age and persons with disabilities
Target 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard	Indicator 10.3.1 Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law
Target 10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality	Indicator 10.4.1 Labour share of GDP
	Indicator 10.4.2 Redistributive impact of fiscal policy on the Gini index
Target 10.5 Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and	Indicator 10.5.1 Financial Soundness Indicators

institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations	
Target 10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions	Indicator 10.6.1 Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations
Target 10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies	Indicator 10.7.1 Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination
	Indicator 10.7.2 Proportion of countries with migration policies that facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people
	Indicator 10.7.3 Number of people who died or disappeared in the process of migration towards an international destination
	Indicator 10.7.4 Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin
Target 10.a Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements	Indicator 10.a.1 Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff
Target 10.b Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes	Indicator 10.b.1 Total resource flows for development (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)
Target 10.c By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent	Indicator 10.c.1 Remittance costs as a proportion of the amount remitted

Source: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>

Despite comprehensive international frameworks, implementation challenges persist globally, with significant gaps between policy commitments and actual outcomes. A decade after the World Bank's 2012 study on Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific which documented that "Women still have less access than men to a range of productive assets and services, including land, financial capital, agricultural extension services, and new information technologies", (World Bank 2023; 2012, p. xiii) more recent analysis suggests these disparities continue largely unchanged. This persistence of gender gaps in access to productive resources, despite a decade of policy commitments and programming, underscores the depth of structural barriers facing women's economic empowerment in the region.

Efforts to prevent violence against women have become a central focus in policy and legal frameworks across numerous nations, yet implementation remains inconsistent and incomplete. These deficiencies are exacerbated by insufficient political commitment and hesitation to emphasize gender equity, particularly among individuals who perceive the CEDAW convention as undermining traditional cultural or religious values. Additionally, government and civil society actors often lack the necessary skills and funding to advance gender-related initiatives. Despite the presence of supportive policies for gender equality, disparities between the sexes persist in nearly all spheres of economic and social progress, with instances of extreme bias and harm toward women sometimes intensifying, underscoring the formidable obstacles in achieving gender equality.

### 3.2. *Legal and Policy Frameworks for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion*

The Philippines has developed one of the most comprehensive legal frameworks for gender equality and social inclusion in Southeast Asia, with landmark legislation that addresses multiple forms of discrimination and marginalization (**Box 2**). The foundation of this framework rests on several key pieces of legislation that collectively create a robust architecture for promoting inclusive development and protecting the rights of marginalized groups.

<b>Box 2. Key Philippine laws on Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)</b>	
<b>Law</b>	<b>Description and Key Provisions</b>
<b>A. Gender Equality and Women's Rights</b>	
Republic Act 9710 - Magna Carta of Women (2009):	Operationalizes the Philippines' commitment to CEDAW, establishing a comprehensive framework to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and promote gender equality across all sectors of society.
Republic Act 10354 - Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act (2012)	Provides national policy for family planning, maternal and child health, and age-appropriate reproductive health education with explicit gender equality goals.
Republic Act 9262 - Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act (2004)	Criminalizes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse of women and children by intimate partners and establishes comprehensive protection mechanisms for victims including legal remedies and support services.
Republic Act 11313 - Safe Spaces Act (2019)	Addresses gender-based sexual harassment in streets, public spaces, online platforms, workplaces, and educational institutions. Establishes penalties for various forms of sexual harassment and creates protection mechanisms.
Republic Act 11210 - Expanded Maternity Leave Act (2019)	Extends maternity leave benefits to 105 days for female workers to support women's reproductive health and work-life balance, recognizing the importance of maternal care.
Republic Act 11861 - Prohibition of Child Marriages Act (2022)	Raises the minimum age of marriage to 18 years and criminalizes child marriage practices, protecting children from forced early unions that disproportionately affect girls.
Republic Act 11861 - Expanded Solo Parents Act (2022)	Enhances benefits and protections for solo parents, addressing the needs of single-parent households with expanded leave benefits, educational assistance, and healthcare support.

<b>B. Disability Rights And Inclusion</b>	
Republic Act 7277 - Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (1992)	Establishes comprehensive frameworks for ensuring equitable access to basic services, employment opportunities, civic participation, and governance for persons with disabilities. Foundation legislation for disability rights in the Philippines.
Republic Act 9442 - Amendment to Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (2007)	Expands discount privileges to 20% on goods and services and strengthens institutional mechanisms for disability rights advocacy and implementation at local government levels.
Republic Act 10754 - Further Amendment to Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (2016)	Provides additional 12% value-added tax exemptions and enhances economic protections for persons with disabilities, improving their purchasing power and economic inclusion.
Republic Act 11228 - Mandatory PhilHealth Coverage for Persons with Disability (2019)	Ensures universal health insurance coverage for all persons with disabilities, removing financial barriers to healthcare access and promoting health equity.
<b>C. Indigenous Peoples' Rights</b>	
Republic Act 8371 - Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (1997)	Establishes legislative framework for protecting ancestral domain rights, cultural integrity, and self-governance structures while addressing historical injustices and contemporary discrimination faced by indigenous communities.
<b>D. Child Protection And Welfare</b>	
Republic Act 7610 - Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (1992)	Provides comprehensive protections for children against various forms of abuse, exploitation, and discrimination including child labor, sexual abuse, and trafficking.
Republic Act 9775 - Anti-Child Pornography Act (2009)	Criminalizes child pornography and establishes severe penalties for exploitation of children in pornographic materials, addressing digital and traditional forms of child sexual exploitation.
Republic Act 10627 - Anti-Bullying Act (2013)	Addresses bullying in schools and educational institutions, requiring anti-bullying policies and creating mechanisms for reporting and addressing harassment among students.
<b>E. Labor And Economic Rights</b>	
Republic Act 10361 - Domestic Workers Act or Batas Kasambahay (2012)	Protects domestic workers' rights against abuse, provides decent working conditions and income standards, and reduces incidence of child labor and trafficking in domestic work.
Republic Act 8972 - Solo Parent's Welfare Act (2000)	Provides benefits and privileges to solo parents and their children including leave benefits, flexible work arrangements, educational assistance, and healthcare support.
<b>F. Anti-Trafficking And Human Security</b>	
Republic Act 9208 - Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2003)	Institutes policies to eliminate trafficking in persons, particularly targeting the protection of women and children who comprise the majority of trafficking victims. Establishes penalties and victim protection services.
Republic Act 10364 - Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2012)	Strengthens penalties and expands the scope of anti-trafficking measures, improving law enforcement capabilities and victim support systems.

<b>G. Senior Citizens' Welfare</b>	
Republic Act 9994 - Expanded Senior Citizens Act (2010)	Provides comprehensive benefits, privileges, and protections for senior citizens including healthcare discounts, transportation benefits, tax exemptions, and economic support for aging population.
<b>H. LGBTQI+ Rights</b>	
Local Ordinances (Various Cities)	While no comprehensive national LGBTQI+ legislation exists, 18 cities have introduced local ordinances and measures to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. The Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Equality Bill remains pending in Congress since 2000.
<b>I. Implementation Framework</b>	
Republic Act 11222 - Simulated Birth Act (2019)	Criminalizes the falsification of birth records and protects children's rights to legal identity, ensuring accurate documentation for accessing government services and benefits.
Gender and Development (GAD) Budget Policy (1995)	Mandates all government agencies to allocate minimum five percent of their annual budgets for gender programs, projects, and activities, though implementation has become compliance-oriented rather than transformational.

Source: Authors' compilation

The Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act 9710), enacted in 2009, serves as the cornerstone of Philippine gender equality legislation (Republic of the Philippines 2009). This comprehensive law operationalizes the country's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and establishes a broad framework for eliminating discrimination across all sectors of society. The Magna Carta sets specific targets for increasing women's participation in high-level government positions and governing councils at local levels, expands maternity benefit coverage, penalizes gender-based discrimination, and provides comprehensive protections against violence targeting women and girls (David et al. 2018). The law's implementing rules establish governance structures for monitoring gender equality goals through the Philippine Commission on Women and create enforcement mechanisms across all levels of government.

Complementing gender-focused legislation, the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Republic Act 7277), originally enacted in 1992 and subsequently amended through Republic Acts 9442 and 10754, provides comprehensive protections for persons with disabilities (RP 1992; 2007; 2016). The law establishes frameworks for ensuring equitable access to basic services, employment opportunities, civic participation, and governance structures. Recent amendments have expanded economic protections through discount privileges and value-added tax exemptions, while strengthening institutional mechanisms for disability rights advocacy and service delivery.

The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (Republic Act 8371) of 1997 creates a legislative framework aimed at addressing historical injustices and contemporary discrimination faced by IP communities (RP 1997). The law acknowledges systematic dispossession and discrimination experienced by these communities while establishing mechanisms for protecting ancestral domain rights, cultural integrity, and self-governance structures. The Act seeks to address the poverty and marginalization that affects IPs, who comprise an estimated 10 to 20 percent of the Philippine population (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs 2019).

Additional significant legislation includes the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act (Republic Act 10354), which provides national policy frameworks for family planning, maternal and child health, and reproductive health education with explicit gender equality goals. The Domestic Workers Act (Republic Act 10361), known as *Batas Kasambahay*, protects domestic workers against abuse while providing decent working conditions and income protections. The Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act (Republic Act 9262) criminalizes multiple forms of intimate partner violence, while the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (Republic Act 9208) addresses the predominantly gendered nature of human trafficking. The Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act 11313) specifically targets gender-based sexual harassment in public spaces, workplaces, and educational institutions, while the Expanded Maternity Leave Act (Republic Act 11210) addresses workplace discrimination by extending maternity benefits to 105 days.

Recent legislative developments have expanded protections for children through the Anti-Child Pornography Act (Republic Act 9775) and strengthened social protection systems through various amendments to existing frameworks. The Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (Republic Act 7610) provides comprehensive protections specifically targeting child vulnerabilities, while senior citizen welfare is addressed through the Expanded Senior Citizens Act (Republic Act 9994) and subsequent amendments.

### 3.3. *Implementation Challenges and Gaps*

While the Philippines has established comprehensive legal frameworks for GEDSI, significant implementation challenges persist across multiple levels of government. Efforts to operationalize legal and policy frameworks are guided by the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), which integrates SDG5 and SDG10 targets into its national strategies. Tools like the SDG Watch, managed by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), monitor localized progress and identify gaps in achieving inclusive development. Despite these mechanisms, challenges persist, particularly in resource allocation and the implementation of programs at the grassroots level. Many marginalized groups, including women with disabilities, remain underserved due to systemic inefficiencies and societal biases (DEPDev 2022).

The Gender and Development (GAD) budget policy, introduced in 1995 and requiring all government agencies to allocate a minimum of five percent of their annual budgets for gender programs, has become increasingly compliance-oriented and formulaic rather than achieving meaningful gender outcomes (PCW 2019). Monitoring by the Philippine Commission on Women reveals weak performance and limited accountability in how gender budgets are utilized across government agencies.

At the local government level, women's participation in decision-making and budgeting processes often remains limited to the mandated five percent allocation rather than being mainstreamed into overall governance processes (Mendoza et al. 2020). This compartmentalization undermines the transformative potential of gender-responsive budgeting and limits the scope of policy interventions addressing structural inequalities.

For persons with disabilities, implementation gaps are particularly pronounced in the functioning of Persons with Disabilities Affairs Offices at provincial, city, and municipal levels. Many positions remain unfilled due to systemic personnel and administrative bottlenecks, while coordination between different levels of government remains weak. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has identified significant discrepancies

between the Magna Carta provisions and international standards established by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly regarding the continued use of impairment-based rather than rights-based approaches to disability assessment and service provision.

Indigenous communities face particularly complex implementation challenges, with the NCIP often lacking sufficient resources and political support to effectively protect ancestral domain rights and cultural integrity. The limited availability of comprehensive data on IPs beyond generic census information exacerbates difficulties in accurately understanding and addressing specific needs and concerns across diverse indigenous communities. The recently conducted survey by the World Bank provides a means of addressing this data gap (Perez-Britto et al. 2024).

### 3.4. *Intersectional Approaches to Understanding Marginalization*

Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized the importance of intersectional analysis for understanding how multiple forms of marginalization interact to create unique patterns of disadvantage. Research by Bayudan-Dacuycuy and Dacuycuy (2021) demonstrates significant gender pay disparities in the Philippine labor market, particularly pronounced in sectors requiring specific skill sets. These disparities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with women-owned micro, small, and medium enterprises facing greater difficulties accessing capital, managing supply chains, and transitioning to digital platforms (Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al. 2022).

The burden of unpaid care work significantly compounds these economic disadvantages, with women disproportionately responsible for household duties that limit labor force participation and career advancement opportunities (Bayudan-Dacuycuy 2020). This connects to broader patterns of gender-based economic inequality, where women's labor force participation remains substantially lower than men's despite high educational attainment levels. Women's political representation in the Philippines has hardly changed, with congressional representation rising slightly from 27% in earlier assessments to approximately 28.3% in the House of Representatives as of 2025, with Senate representation even at 20.8%, reduced from 25% (IPU 2025; David et al. 2017). More static patterns at local government and corporate levels are noted, where women continue to hold approximately 25% of leadership positions.

For PWDs, the intersections with gender create particularly complex vulnerabilities. Women with disabilities face compounded discrimination in accessing education, employment, and healthcare services, while often experiencing higher rates of violence and abuse compared to both men with disabilities and women without disabilities. The absence of disaggregated data on the experiences of women with disabilities, particularly those from IP communities or living in poverty, limits the development of targeted interventions addressing these intersectional vulnerabilities.

Educational access data reveals the magnitude of exclusion facing children with disabilities: while around 400,000 children with disabilities are enrolled among the Philippines' 20 million learners (representing just 1.2% of the student population), prevalence rates suggest that at least 1 million children with disabilities (approximately 4% of the school-age population) should be accessing education services (Chan 2024).

The 2016 NDPS revealed higher disability rates among females (15%) compared to males (9%), with moderate disability affecting 49 percent of females versus 45 percent of males (PSA 2019). These disparities compound existing gender-based disadvantages and create multiple barriers to accessing education, employment, healthcare, and social services.

The emerging digital economy presents both opportunities and challenges for marginalized groups. Women are more likely to engage in platform-based work due to flexibility needs but often face precarious working conditions and limited social protections. For persons with disabilities, the pandemic transition to online services has revealed significant barriers in digital access and technology utilization that further compound existing exclusions.

### 3.5. Philippine Performance in Global Gender Equality Assessments

As pointed out in the introduction section of this report, the Philippines has demonstrated a remarkable performance in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Index since the index was first released in 2006. The country has consistently ranked as the top performer in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region. However, the country's trajectory over nearly two decades reveals both achievements and volatility. While rankings have fluctuated from a peak of 5th place globally in 2013 to as low as 25th place in 2024 before recovering to 20th place in 2025, the underlying index scores provide a more nuanced picture of actual progress (WEF 2025).

As detailed in **Table 1**, the Philippines maintained consistently strong index scores above 0.75 throughout most of this period, with the country's best performance achieved in 2013 when it scored 0.7832 out of a possible 1.0. The sustained excellence reflected relatively narrow gender gaps across multiple dimensions, particularly in educational attainment, health outcomes, and political empowerment. Notably, even during periods of ranking decline, the index scores remained relatively stable, suggesting that ranking volatility often reflects changes in the number of participating countries and comparative performance rather than dramatic domestic reversals in gender equality progress.

**Table 1. Philippines' WEF Global Gender Gap Index rankings (2006-2025)**

Year	Rank	Total Countries Assessed	Score (imparity = 0, parity = 1)	Key Notes in Ranking
2006	6	115	0.7516	Inaugural year ranking
2007	6	128	0.7629	Maintained top 10 status
2008	6	130	0.7568	Consistent top 10 performance
2009	9	134	0.7579	Decline by three positions but remained top 10
2010	9	134	0.7654	Stable ranking
2011	8	135	0.7685	Improved one position
2012	8	135	0.7697	Maintained ranking from previous year
2013	5	136	0.7832	Best performance to date
2014	9	142	0.7814	Declined from peak
2015	7	145	0.7900	Recovered position
2016	7	144	0.7860	Stable top 10 ranking
2017	10	144	0.7900	Declined by three positions; Improvement but last year in top 10
2018	8	149	0.7990	10

Year	Rank	Total Countries Assessed	Score (imparity = 0, parity = 1)	Key Notes in Ranking
2020	16	153	0.7810	Dropped out of top 10
2021	17	156	0.7840	Slight decline
2022	19	146	0.7830	Continued downward trend
2023	16	146	0.7910	Recovery of three positions
2024	25	146	0.7790	Significant decline (by 9 positions)
2025	20	148	0.7810	Recovery (by 5 positions)

Note: Scores are expressed as decimals by WEF.

Source: World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Reports (2006–2025)

Despite volatility in ranking, the Philippines has maintained its position as the leading performer in ASEAN since 2006, ranking 20th globally in 2025 with a gender gap closure score of 78.1%. The pattern demonstrates that gender equality progress can be dynamic and sometimes reversible, requiring sustained policy attention to maintain gains. The score-based analysis reveals that while the Philippines has maintained consistently strong performance in absolute terms, relative positioning has become more challenging as more countries participate in the index and global gender equality standards continue to evolve.

The most significant declines occurred during 2020-2024, when the Philippines dropped out of the global top 10 for the first time since the index's inception. The 2020 decline to 16th place was primarily driven by sharp deterioration in the Political Empowerment subindex, particularly a dramatic decrease in women's Cabinet representation from 25% in 2017 to just 10% in 2019. Additional factors contributing to the 2020 decline included setbacks in Educational Attainment, where the country fell from 1st to 37th place in that category, though the specific drivers—whether related to female participation rates, completion patterns, or methodological changes—require further verification. Economic Participation and Opportunity also saw deterioration, while Health and Survival remained relatively stable, with these combined shifts reducing the country's overall score from 0.799 in 2018 to 0.781 in 2020.

The 2024 decline to 25th place reflected continued challenges in economic parity and political representation, though the 2025 recovery to 20th place suggests renewed progress across multiple dimensions. This recovery appears driven by improvements in women's cabinet representation (rising to 21.1% by 2024) and gains in economic indicators, though sustained progress will require addressing the underlying structural factors that contribute to such volatility (WEF 2024, 2025). This period of fluctuation highlights both the sensitivity of WEF indicators to annual policy changes and the importance of avoiding complacency during periods of apparent improvement, as gains can prove fragile without institutional reforms that ensure systematic rather than discretionary inclusion.

The volatility in rankings in the index correlates directly with fluctuations in women's cabinet representation, which dropped from 36% in 2010 to just 10% in 2019 before recovering to 21.1% by 2024 (WEF 2024, 2025). The discretionary nature of presidential appointments creates structural vulnerability to sudden changes in gender representation based on individual preferences rather than systematic inclusion policies.

Executive branch gender representation reveals stark patterns of occupational segregation. Women have been concentrated in traditionally "female-associated" departments such as Social Welfare and Development, and Tourism, while remaining severely underrepresented in traditionally powerful departments including Agriculture, Defense, Interior and Local

Government, Public Works, Finance, and Foreign Affairs (David et al. 2018, 2017). This pattern reflects broader societal gender stereotypes that associate women with care-oriented roles while excluding them from economic and security decision-making positions in the cabinet.

Despite this volatility in ranking, the Philippines has maintained its position as the leading performer in ASEAN since 2006, ranking 20th globally in 2025 with a gender gap closure score of 78.1%. This sustained regional leadership is particularly noteworthy given that the Philippines and New Zealand are the only two countries in the Eastern Asia and Pacific region to have achieved top 10 global rankings since the index's inception.

The WEF assessments consistently show that while the Philippines has achieved near-parity in educational attainment (scoring 99.9% in 2023), significant challenges persist in political empowerment (40.9% in 2023), economic participation (78.9% in 2023), and health and survival (96.8% in 2023), with these scores showing considerable volatility across years (WEF 2023, 2024). This pattern reflects a common challenge where educational gender parity does not automatically translate into broader empowerment outcomes.

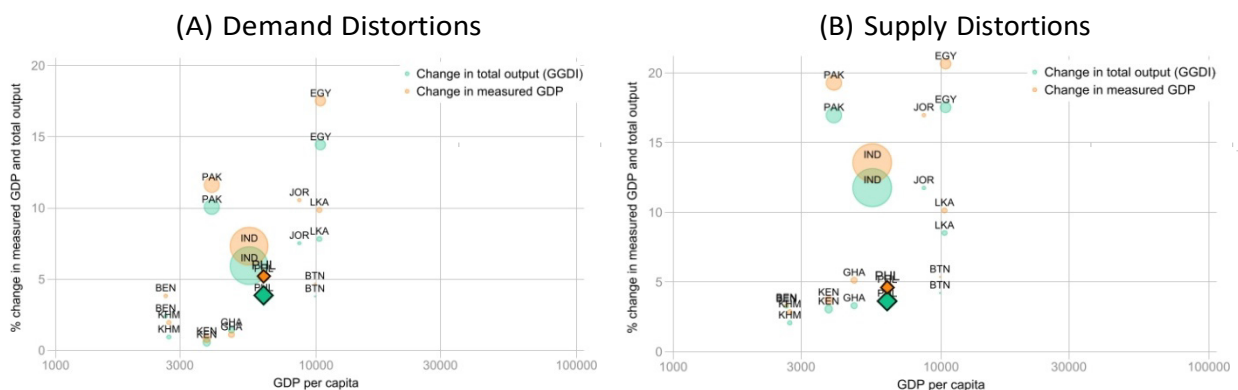
Despite strong performance in educational gender parity, with the Philippines achieving and even surpassing enrollment targets across education levels, substantial challenges remain in translating educational achievements into economic empowerment and political representation (David and Albert 2015; Albert and Raymundo 2016). Notably, this disconnect cannot be attributed to female educational disadvantage, as girls consistently outperform boys in academic achievement and demonstrate higher enrollment rates in higher education. Instead, the disconnect reflects complex structural barriers that persist beyond the educational system, including labor market discrimination, occupational segregation, and limited opportunities for women to convert educational credentials into economic advancement.

However, the achievement of quantitative parity—and indeed female advantage—in educational enrollment does not necessarily ensure meaningful educational equality for all groups. Research indicates that while the Philippines has achieved gender parity and female advantage in enrollment across educational levels, significant quality disparities remain, with international assessments revealing that Filipino students consistently underperform global averages in reading, mathematics, and science (OECD 2019; DepEd 2023). These quality gaps may particularly disadvantage marginalized students regardless of gender, including those from very low-income families, Indigenous Peoples' communities, and rural areas, who may have formal access to education but receive lower-quality instruction and inadequate resources that limit their potential for meaningful economic participation.

Complementing the WEF's focus on gender parity across education, health, economic participation, and political empowerment, is a recent study on the Global Gender Distortions Index (GGDI), which measures the productivity losses that countries experience due to gender-based misallocation in labor markets (Goldberg et al. 2025). Developed by researchers from Yale University and the World Bank, the GGDI provides a distinct economic lens for understanding gender inequality by quantifying how discrimination and structural barriers that limit women's access to appropriate employment opportunities can reduce aggregate economic output. Unlike parity-focused measures, the GGDI distinguishes between labor demand distortions, such as discrimination in hiring for formal sector jobs, and labor supply distortions, such as social and institutional frictions that discourage women's labor force participation (Goldberg et al. 2025).

**Figure 2** illustrates the Philippines' positioning within the global landscape of gender-based productivity losses from demand and supply distortions as measured by the GGDI within a selected group of developing economies including Benin, Bhutan, Cambodia, Egypt, Ghana, India, Jordan, Kenya, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (using a replication package provided by Goldberg). The analysis reveals several key insights about the Philippines' labor market dynamics in comparative perspective. In Panel A, examining demand-side distortions such as employment discrimination and occupational segregation, the Philippines (PHL) demonstrates moderate productivity losses relative to the comparison group. The country's positioning suggests more favorable outcomes than several South Asian peers, including Pakistan (PAK) and India (IND), which show higher levels of demand-side gender distortions. However, the Philippines shows similar patterns to Cambodia (KHM), reflecting common challenges in Southeast Asian contexts where cultural and institutional barriers limit women's access to formal sector employment despite relatively high educational attainment. Panel B, focusing on supply-side distortions including social norms and institutional barriers that discourage women's labor force participation, reveals the Philippines' relatively strong performance compared to Middle Eastern and North African countries in the sample, particularly Egypt (EGY) and Jordan (JOR), which demonstrate substantially higher productivity losses from supply-side constraints. The Philippines shows patterns more similar to African economies like Ghana (GHA) and Kenya (KEN), suggesting that supply-side barriers—while present—are less constraining than in more restrictive social contexts.

**Figure 2. Philippines' position vs comparable developing countries in the Global Gender Distortions Index (GGDI)**



Source: Goldberg et al., 2025

Notes: The figure plots GGDI and the change in measured GDP for all country observations near the year 2014 against their GDP per capita. GGDI measures the increase in total economic activity (including home production) due to the removal of labor demand (Panel A) and labor supply (Panel B) gender distortions. Measured GDP is the increase in GDP following the removal of labor demand and supply gender distortions. Philippines is shown as "PHL" in both panels.

The GGDI analysis indicates that demand-side interventions—addressing workplace discrimination, occupational segregation, and barriers to women's advancement in formal employment—may yield greater economic returns for the Philippines than supply-side policies focused solely on increasing women's labor force participation rates (Goldberg et al. 2025). This finding complements the WEF Global Gender Gap Index results, which show the Philippines performing relatively well on educational attainment and health parity but facing persistent challenges in economic participation quality and political empowerment.

The comparative analysis indicates that among the selected countries, the Philippines faces moderate gender-based productivity losses across both dimensions, with demand-side interventions potentially yielding greater returns than supply-side policies. This positioning reflects the country's historical success in female educational participation and relatively high women's labor force participation rates, while highlighting persistent challenges in workplace discrimination and occupational segregation that prevent the full economic utilization of women's capabilities.

The cross-country comparison reveals significant variation in the relative importance of demand versus supply constraints, with countries like Bhutan (BTN) and Sri Lanka (LKA) showing different patterns that reflect their unique institutional and cultural contexts. For policy design, this analysis suggests that the Philippines could benefit from targeted interventions addressing workplace discrimination and barriers to women's advancement in formal employment, while countries with higher supply-side distortions might prioritize different policy approaches focused on increasing women's labor force participation.

Gender-based misallocation can result in substantial efficiency and productivity losses, with the comparative analysis of selected developing economies revealing significant variation in potential gains from eliminating labor market distortions. Among the countries examined—Benin, Bhutan, Cambodia, Egypt, Ghana, India, Jordan, Kenya, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines—the analysis demonstrates distinct regional patterns in gender-based productivity losses.

Middle Eastern countries in the sample, particularly Egypt (EGY) and Jordan (JOR), show the highest levels of gender-based productivity losses, consistent with broader regional patterns where restrictive social norms and institutional barriers create substantial economic inefficiencies. South Asian economies including Pakistan (PAK) and India (IND) demonstrate significant demand-side distortions reflecting persistent workplace discrimination and occupational segregation, while countries like Sri Lanka (LKA) and Bhutan (BTN) show more moderate levels of gender misallocation.

Within the comparative sample, Sub-Saharan African countries including Ghana (GHA), Kenya (KEN), and Benin (BEN) exhibit varying patterns of gender-based productivity losses, with some showing relatively lower distortion levels that may reflect different labor market structures and women's traditional roles in agricultural and informal sectors. Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines (PHL) and Cambodia (KHM), occupy a middle position in the productivity loss spectrum, suggesting moderate levels of gender misallocation that present significant opportunities for economic gains through targeted policy interventions.

The cross-country analysis on GGDI reveals that demand-side distortions—particularly employment discrimination and barriers to women's advancement in formal employment—consistently account for substantial portions of productivity losses across development levels, while supply-side constraints vary more dramatically based on cultural and institutional contexts specific to each country's social framework.

These barriers to women's access to formal employment encompass several interconnected challenges documented in the Philippines context: workplace discrimination and stereotypes that favor men over women for jobs, occupational segregation that concentrates women in lower-paid service sectors despite their educational advantages, and systemic barriers to advancement in formal employment including limited access to leadership positions in male-

dominated sectors. Additional barriers include discriminatory lending practices that limit women's entrepreneurship opportunities, with female entrepreneurs reporting complex loan application procedures, unfavorable interest rates, and high collateral requirements that disproportionately affect women-owned businesses. For women with disabilities, these challenges are compounded by inadequate workplace accommodations, employer prejudices about capabilities, and limited understanding of reasonable accommodation requirements. The persistence of gendered social norms that assign primary responsibility for unpaid care work to women further constrains their ability to participate fully in formal labor markets, even when educational qualifications would support such participation. This finding suggests that policy interventions targeting workplace discrimination and barriers to women's access to formal employment may yield greater economic returns than those focused solely on increasing women's labor force participation rates. For countries like the Philippines, this analysis highlights the economic imperative of addressing gender-based labor market distortions as a complement to the social justice arguments for gender equality.

### *3.6. International Comparative Perspectives*

Lower labor force participation among women is noticeable not only in the Philippines but across all ASEAN member states, and even in many countries across Asia and the Pacific, despite narrowing gender gaps in education that have even reversed in some cases. More recent evidence underscores this paradox: in 2023, women's labor force participation in the Philippines was around 50 %, compared to 74 % for men (PSA 2024), and similar gender gaps persist in Indonesia (53 % vs. 82 %) and Malaysia (54 % vs. 80 %) (ILO 2024). The Asian Development Bank (2022) highlights that women's educational attainment has caught up with or exceeded that of men, yet participation rates remain stagnant because of time poverty and the heavy burden of unpaid care work, which discourages job seeking and leaves much of women's work uncounted in official labor statistics.

Cross-national evidence suggests that women and girls across most Asia-Pacific countries bear larger burdens of unpaid care and domestic work, including cooking, cleaning, person-to-person care activities, and resource collection activities such as water transport (Hirway 2016). This range of household, child, and elderly care responsibilities that goes unremunerated represents a compelling explanation for women's continued exclusion from local and national economies despite educational achievements.

International research on disability inclusion demonstrates that the Philippines faces similar challenges to other developing countries in transitioning from medical to social models of disability (WHO 2011). The WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health provides frameworks for understanding disability as resulting from interactions between impairments and environmental factors, but implementation of these approaches requires substantial institutional and cultural shifts that remain incomplete across many countries.

### *3.7. Literature on Methodological Approaches*

Studies on gender equality and social inclusion increasingly employs sophisticated methodological approaches that recognize the limitations of single-method studies. Mixed-method designs prove particularly effective in capturing both broad patterns evident in quantitative data and nuanced experiences that emerge through qualitative investigation (David et al. 2018). Successful studies combine quantitative analysis of leadership trends with

qualitative assessment of systemic barriers, providing comprehensive views of gender-based exclusion that neither approach could achieve independently.

Intersectional analysis has proven particularly valuable for understanding how different forms of marginalization interact and compound each other (Bayudan-Dacuycuy and Baje 2021). Research integrating survey analysis with qualitative assessment reveals complex patterns of advantage and disadvantage that vary significantly across different population subgroups and geographic contexts. This methodological approach helps identify both systemic barriers and promising intervention points for policy reform.

Disability research benefits significantly from participatory approaches that engage persons with disabilities as research partners rather than subjects (Dianito et al. 2021). Focus groups and key informant interviews conducted in collaboration with disability organizations provide insights into implementation challenges of inclusive policies while respecting the expertise of persons with disabilities regarding their own experiences and needs.

Longitudinal analysis proves essential for tracking progress toward gender equality and social inclusion goals while identifying persistent barriers that require sustained policy attention (Albert and Raymundo 2016). The combination of national surveys, administrative data, and qualitative research enables comprehensive assessment of policy effectiveness and implementation gaps across different levels of government and sectors of society.

Compared to numerous other nations, the Philippines possesses a relatively progressive collection of laws and policies focused on advancing gender equality and equity. The wider legal context also bolsters SDG 5, yet actual conditions on the ground—together with the ways these laws are construed and enforced by responsible offices, especially local government units (LGUs)—demand sustained oversight and review. Data reveals roughly equal access for women and men in domains like education, employment, and public sector engagement, with women occasionally exceeding men in fields such as schooling and bureaucratic roles. Nevertheless, these overarching national figures obscure substantial inequalities within targeted industries, sectors, leadership roles, and vulnerabilities.

Although the Philippines outperforms many peers in gender equality benchmarks—not merely in World Economic Forum rankings but also in diverse global evaluations—enduring obstacles for gender equality linger. These encompass entrenched glass ceilings in attaining gender parities for high-level decision-making arenas. Further, elevated vulnerabilities to abuse and exploitation among particular demographics of women and girls are noticeable.

#### **4. Progress on SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**

This section describes the conditions on Gender Equality in the country, particularly SDG5 targets based on available data from the PSA on National SDG Indicators, or from Global SDG Indicators maintained by the UN Statistics Division. The analysis is enriched by insights from stakeholder interviews conducted across government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector entities, and women leaders, providing on-the-ground perspectives on implementation realities and emerging challenges. The visual in **Figure 3** suggests that stakeholders view policy, governments, trainings/educators, implementation, budget/funds, and community/local signals as the areas where they see the most leverage for accelerating gender equality outcomes.



partner violence, while the Expanded Maternity Leave Act (Republic Act 11210) addresses workplace discrimination by extending maternity benefits to 105 days.

### **Gaps in Enforcement and Accountability Mechanisms**

Despite comprehensive legal frameworks, significant implementation gaps persist across multiple levels of government. Interviews with officials across several national government agencies reveal that the critical challenge lies not in policy formulation but in translating policies into meaningful on-ground impact. The Gender and Development budget policy, mandating five percent allocation of agency budgets for gender programs, has become compliance-oriented rather than transformational. Interviews reveal that many local government units (LGUs) misuse Gender and Development (GAD) funds for activities only tangentially related to gender development, such as general community events or unrelated health programs. A civil society leader noted that enforcement of the mandatory five percent GAD budget allocation remains inconsistent, with the Philippine Commission on Women lacking sufficient enforcement capacity to ensure proper utilization.

### **Overcoming Discrimination in Skills Development and Economic Empowerment**

Insights from technical-vocational education sector leadership indicate that while policies exist, political will and committed leadership at all levels remain critical determinants of successful implementation. As one policy official emphasized, "The policies are already there. Political will of leaders should also be there. Critical is policy and political will of leaders to get things done."

Significant challenges also persist in translating anti-discrimination policies into accessible training and economic opportunities for marginalized women. The TESDA faces a fundamental funding gap, requiring 311 billion pesos annually to properly serve disadvantaged sectors through scholarships while receiving only 17 billion pesos in actual budget allocation. This massive shortfall of nearly 95% severely constrains the agency's ability to implement gender-responsive skills training programs effectively.

Government agencies are setting specific targets for women's participation in non-traditional sectors to address issues on discrimination against women. TESDA has established targets for a three percent annual increase in women's enrollment in non-traditional trades. However, implementation faces challenges related to infrastructure readiness, industry acceptance, and perception towards women's participation in non-traditional sectors. The agency acknowledges that equipment and facility modifications may be necessary to accommodate gender-inclusive programming, with estimates suggesting significant cost implications for making training centers fully accessible and gender-responsive.

Experience from civil society organizations working in marginalized communities reveals that access to opportunities remains concentrated in traditional priority areas such as Metro Manila, Iloilo, Davao, and Cebu, while women in conflict-affected areas, disaster-prone regions, and remote provinces face systematic exclusion from programming. As one NGO leader observed, women in areas "right outside of BARMM" but not included in the Bangsamoro region are particularly underserved, lacking access to programs from diplomatic missions, UN agencies, or major development organizations.

Interviews with women entrepreneurs and corporate leaders reveal systemic challenges that legal frameworks alone cannot address. As highlighted by a prominent female entrepreneur, "women in the Philippines are not all the same," requiring different programming approaches for women in Metro Manila versus those in Mindanao or other regions. This recognition demands more nuanced, community-specific interventions rather than universal solutions.

The venture capital and startup ecosystem presents particular challenges for women entrepreneurs, with systematic underrepresentation in investment conversations and decision-making processes. A female founder noted observing "very few women building companies" and "no women on investment panels and investor committees, very few female investors" during her extensive involvement in the tech startup ecosystem.

Educational credentials emerge as transformative factors in overcoming gender biases. One corporate leader observed an immediate shift in how colleagues received her ideas after completing her MBA, noting that external validation often carries more weight than internal recognition for women in leadership positions. Comments referencing prestigious institutions become shorthand for credibility that transcends gender biases.

### **Regional Variations in Discrimination Patterns**

Disaggregated data reveals significant variations in discrimination patterns across different regions and population groups. Rural and indigenous women face compounded discrimination due to geographic isolation, cultural barriers, and limited access to legal remedies. Women with disabilities encounter additional barriers in accessing justice systems, while economic constraints prevent many women from pursuing legal remedies even when discrimination is clearly documented.

The 2022 Philippine Voluntary National Review (VNR) highlights persistent implementation gaps across different geographic areas, particularly affecting marginalized communities in remote regions that was first pointed out in the 2016 VNR, and thus the country has sought to reduce such inequalities by way of regional development (DEPDev 2022). These patterns of discrimination manifest differently across regions, with some areas showing more pronounced gender gaps in access to economic opportunities, education, and essential services.

Regional typologies emerge that reflect different combinations of economic structure, cultural context, and development levels. Urban regions like the National Capital Region (NCR) demonstrate relatively smaller gender gaps in formal sector access, while regions with predominantly agricultural economies or those affected by conflict show more pronounced discriminatory patterns. Understanding these regional variations is essential for developing targeted anti-discrimination interventions that address the specific combinations of challenges faced by women in different geographic contexts.

### **Intersectional Discrimination Challenges**

Interviews with several key informants across the public and private sectors as well as civil society highlight the complex nature of intersectional discrimination that legal frameworks struggle to address comprehensively. Women with disabilities face particularly acute challenges, with infrastructure barriers, societal stigma, and limited specialized programming creating multiple layers of exclusion. Government officials acknowledge that "rural women

with disabilities face both stigma and transport challenges," noting that "one-off programs miss these overlaps."

Corporate leadership perspectives reveal additional dimensions of discrimination in workplace settings. Female executives in male-dominated industries report that success requires mastering a delicate balance, with senior management preferring colleagues who "look and sound like them," creating pressure to mirror established communication styles while avoiding the double bind of appearing either too aggressive or insufficiently confident.

The digital transformation landscape reveals surprising patterns in technology adoption that intersect with gender dynamics. Rather than age determining digital adoption rates, confidence and risk tolerance emerge as primary factors, with men consistently showing greater willingness to experiment with new digital tools while women cite concerns about making mistakes and comfort levels as barriers to adoption.

#### 4.2. SDG5.2: Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls

##### Prevalence Trends and Reporting Mechanisms

While the Philippines has established comprehensive legal frameworks to address violence against women and girls, progress in reducing actual prevalence remains mixed across different forms of violence and population groups (**Table 2**). Intimate partner violence data shows concerning trends, with the proportion of ever-partnered women aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual, or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner remaining at 11.9 percent in 2022, a decrease from 14.7 percent in 2017 but still well above the 2030 target of 10.6 percent.

**Table 2. Violence against women and girls trends (2017-2022)**

Indicator	2008	2013	2017	2022 Latest	2030 Target	Data Source
Overall intimate partner violence (%)	14.7	15.6	14.7	11.9	10.6	NDHS, PSA
Physical violence by intimate partner (%)	7.3	5.4	4.4	3.2	2.4	NDHS, PSA
Sexual violence by intimate partner (%)	4.8	3.2	2.2	1.3	1.0	NDHS, PSA
Psychological violence by intimate partner (%)	10.1	13.4	12.9	10.5	10.3	NDHS, PSA
Physical or sexual violence by intimate partner (%)			5.5	3.8	3.2	NDHS, PSA
Sexual violence by non-intimate partner (%)			0.1	0.2	0.2	NDHS, PSA
Reported gender-based violence cases			60,755*	19,112	-	PNP

Note: \* = 2016 data

Source: PSA SDG Watch

Analysis of specific violence types reveals varied patterns of change. Physical violence by intimate partners decreased from 4.4 percent in 2017 to 3.2 percent in 2022, while sexual

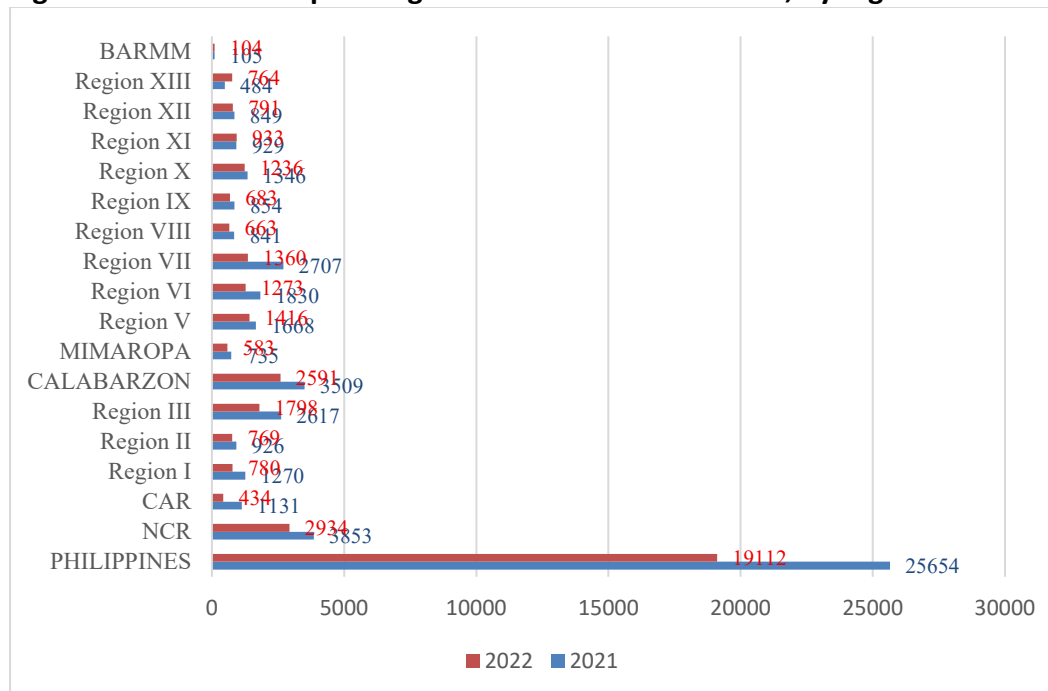
violence declined from 2.2 percent to 1.3 percent over the same period. Physical violence decreased from 4.4 percent in 2017 to 3.2 percent in 2022, approaching the 2030 target of 2.4 percent. Sexual violence declined from 2.2 percent to 1.3 percent, nearing the target of 1.0 percent. Psychological violence shows the highest prevalence, decreasing from 12.9 percent in 2017 to 10.5 percent in 2022, but remains above target levels and indicating that emotional and mental abuse patterns may be worsening or becoming more openly reported.

Sexual violence by persons other than intimate partners remains at concerning levels, with 0.2 percent of women and girls aged 15 years and older experiencing such violence in the previous 12 months as of 2022, unchanged from 2017 levels. This stagnation suggests that interventions targeting sexual violence outside intimate relationships require strengthened implementation and community-based prevention strategies.

Reporting patterns through formal systems reveal complex dynamics. The number of reported gender-based violence cases decreased from 60,735 in 2016 to 19,112 in 2022, though this may reflect changes in reporting patterns rather than actual prevalence. Meanwhile reported abuse cases among women and children dropped from 48,199 in 2015 to 12,385 in 2022. These patterns suggest either decreasing actual incidence or persistent underreporting due to social stigma, inadequate institutional response capacity, or both factors operating simultaneously. The reluctance to seek formal help highlights the complex social and cultural barriers that prevent women from accessing available services, underscoring the need for community-based interventions that address stigma alongside strengthening institutional responses.

Reported gender-based violence data by the Philippine National Police (PNP) shows a significant nationwide decrease from 25,654 reported cases in 2021 to 19,112 cases in 2022 (Figure 4). This 25.5 percent decline nationally requires cautious interpretation, however, since reduced reporting does not necessarily indicate reduced gender-based violence incidents.

**Figure 4. Number of reported gender-based violence cases, by region: 2021-2022**

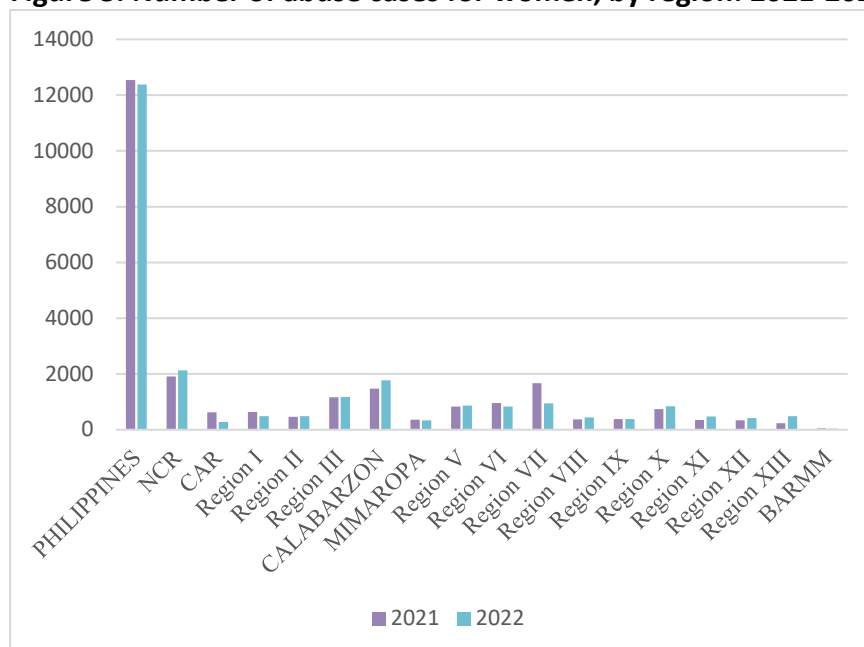


Source: PNP

Regional patterns varied dramatically, with the Cordillera Administrative Region experiencing the steepest proportional drop in reported incidents of 62 percent (from 1,131 to 434 cases), while Region XIII bucked the trend with a substantial 58 percent increase from 484 to 764 cases. Most regions followed the national downward pattern, with particularly notable decreases in Region VII (50 percent decline) and consistent reductions across urban or mostly urbanized regions like NCR and CALABARZON.

Reported abuse cases for women showed relative stability nationally, declining slightly from 12,543 to 12,385 cases between 2021 and 2022. Regional patterns revealed significant variations, with NCR and CALABARZON experiencing notable increases (**Figure 5**). NCR rose from 1,906 to 2,128 cases, while CALABARZON increased from 1,474 to 1,768 cases), suggesting either improved reporting mechanisms or actual increases in incidents within these highly populated urban areas. The most dramatic regional change occurred in Region XIII, which more than doubled from 235 to 484 cases, while CAR experienced a substantial decrease from 626 to 283 cases, mirroring the pattern observed in gender-based violence data for the same region.

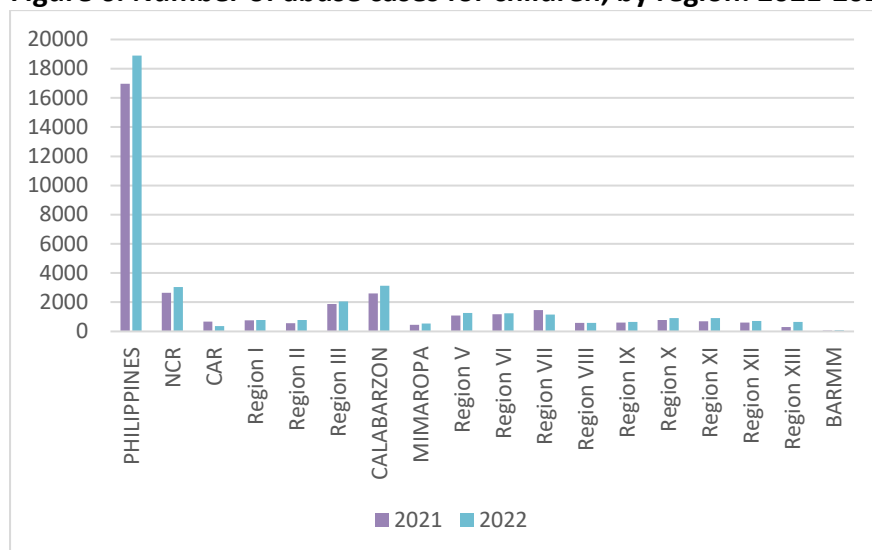
**Figure 5. Number of abuse cases for women, by region: 2021-2022**



Source: PNP

In contrast, reported child abuse cases showed a more concerning upward trend, increasing nationally from 16,966 to 18,888 cases—an 11.3 percent rise that indicates either deteriorating conditions for children or enhanced reporting and detection mechanisms (**Figure 6**). The increases were widespread across most regions, with CALABARZON showing the largest absolute increase from 2,609 to 3,137 cases, and Region XIII again demonstrating a significant surge from 300 to 661 cases. Only CAR and Region VII bucked this trend with decreases in reported child abuse, though CAR's decline from 679 to 363 cases appears consistent with the broader pattern of reduced reporting across multiple violence categories in that region, raising questions about data collection reliability rather than actual improvements in child safety.

**Figure 6. Number of abuse cases for children, by region: 2021-2022**



Source: PNP

A critical limitation of these datasets on gender-based violence and reported abuse cases from the police is the complete absence of perpetrator information, focusing exclusively on victim-centered reporting. This gap prevents comprehensive analysis of violence patterns, repeat offender identification, or understanding of perpetrator-victim relationships that would inform targeted prevention strategies. The declining numbers across most regions raise questions about whether improvements reflect actual safety gains or changes in reporting patterns, law enforcement capacity, or victim willingness to come forward—factors that may have been particularly affected by pandemic-related disruptions and social changes during this period.

Corporate sector perspectives reveal important dimensions of violence prevention that extend beyond government response mechanisms. Interviews with one firm demonstrate how private sector initiatives can complement formal reporting systems by creating safer workplace environments and promoting gender-sensitive recruitment practices. Their experience administering approximately 30,000 gender-neutral assessments monthly suggests that systematic elimination of discriminatory hiring practices can contribute to broader violence prevention by promoting women's economic empowerment and reducing vulnerabilities associated with economic dependence.

Multiple stakeholder interviews confirm that violence against women and girls remains a persistent challenge requiring coordinated responses across sectors. While the Revised Penal Code, Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act, and Safe Spaces Act provide legal frameworks, implementation and support services remain insufficient. Civil society organizations working directly with survivors highlight gaps in sexual and reproductive health programming due to institutional and cultural resistance. One NGO leader noted that limited access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services presents barriers to addressing the root causes of gender-based violence, particularly for young women who may face multiple pregnancies without adequate support systems.

### **Institutional Response Capacities**

Administrative data from the DSWD reveals a dramatic decline in violence against women cases served, dropping from 6,803 cases in 2015 to just 1,022 cases in 2020—the lowest point in the series—before partially recovering to 2,739 cases in 2023 (Table 3).

**Table 3. National trends in government response to violence cases, Philippines: 2015-2023**

Case Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change 2015-2020	Change 2020-2023	Overall Change 2015-2023
Violence Against Women	6,803	6,437	4,190	2,633	2,596	1,022	1,887	2,551	2,739	-5,781 (-85.0%)	+1,717 (+168.0%)	-4,064 (-59.7%)
Violence Against Children	4,374	3,857	3,495	4,087	2,855	1,683	2,243	3,616	3,052	-2,691 (-61.5%)	+1,369 (+81.3%)	-1,322 (-30.2%)

Source: Department of Social Welfare and Development

This trajectory suggests that the 2020 decline likely reflects the severe disruption of social services during the COVID-19 pandemic rather than actual reductions in violence, as cases began recovering in subsequent years but remained well below pre-pandemic levels. Similarly, violence against children cases served declined from 4,374 in 2015 to a low of 1,683 in 2020, before recovering more substantially to 3,052 cases in 2023, indicating that child protection services may have been more resilient in their post-pandemic recovery compared to services for women.

Regional disparities in service provision reveal significant inequalities in government response capacity across the archipelago (Table 4). In 2023, NCR served the highest number of violence against women cases with 721, followed by Region VII with 366 cases and Region III with 260 cases, while several regions including MIMAROPA and BARMM reported zero cases served—a pattern that likely reflects service delivery gaps rather than absence of violence. The most concerning regional pattern appears in Region XI (Davao), which served 1,806 violence against women cases in 2015 but only 87 cases in 2023, representing a 95 percent decline that raises questions about service continuity and accessibility in the region.

**Table 4. Regional variations in violence against women cases served, selected regions: 2015 and 2023**

Region	2015	2023	Change (Cases)	Change (%)
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	<b>6803</b>	<b>2739</b>	<b>-4064</b>	<b>-59.7</b>
NCR	2430	721	-1709	-70.3
CAR	59	89	30	50.8
Ilocos Region (I)	33	177	144	436.4
Cagayan Valley (II)	126	47	-79	-62.7
Central Luzon (III)	307	260	-47	-15.3
CALABARZON (IVA)	92	160	68	73.9
MIMAROPA	..	0	..	..
Bicol Region (V)	134	82	-52	-38.8
Western Visayas (VI)	17	74	57	335.3
Central Visayas (VII)	485	366	-119	-24.5
Eastern Visayas (VIII)	360	96	-264	-73.3
Zamboanga Peninsula (IX)	643	230	-413	-64.2
Northern Mindanao (X)	187	231	44	23.5

Region	2015	2023	Change (Cases)	Change (%)
Davao Region (XI)	1806	87	-1719	-95.2
SOCCSKSARGEN (XII)	82	42	-40	-48.8
Caraga (XIII)	42	77	35	83.3
BARMM	0	0	0	

Source: Department of Social Welfare and Development

For violence against children cases (**Table 5**), NCR maintained the highest service volume with 684 cases in 2023, while Region VI showed a notable increase from 34 cases in 2022 to 281 cases in 2023, suggesting either improved reporting mechanisms or enhanced service capacity. These dramatic regional variations indicate that national-level improvements mask significant disparities in local government capacity to identify, respond to, and support survivors of gender-based violence and child abuse.

**Table 5. Regional changes in violence against children cases served, selected regions: 2022-2023**

Region	2022	2023	Change (Cases)	Change (%)
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	<b>3616</b>	<b>3052</b>	<b>-564</b>	<b>-15.6</b>
NCR	784	684	-100	-12.8
CAR	218	89	-129	-59.2
Ilocos Region (I)	277	180	-97	-35.0
Cagayan Valley (II)	181	68	-113	-62.4
Central Luzon (III)	496	377	-119	-24.0
CALABARZON (IVA)	106	190	84	79.2
MIMAROPA	11	0	-11	-100.0
Bicol Region (V)	87	107	20	23.0
Western Visayas (VI)	34	281	247	726.5
Central Visayas (VII)	210	205	-5	-2.4
Eastern Visayas (VIII)	316	138	-178	-56.3
Zamboanga Peninsula (IX)	159	201	42	26.4
Northern Mindanao (X)	246	187	-59	-24.0
Davao Region (XI)	97	130	33	34.0
SOCCSKSARGEN (XII)	364	93	-271	-74.5
Caraga (XIII)	30	122	92	306.7
BARMM	..	..	..	

Source: Department of Social Welfare and Development

The 2022 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) revealed that only 34 percent of women who experienced violence sought help, while 24 percent told someone but did not seek formal assistance, and 42 percent never disclosed the abuse. This pattern primarily reflects the social stigma associated with reporting intimate partner violence rather than deficiencies in institutional response capacity, though accessibility of support services remains a concern. The reluctance to seek formal help highlights the complex social and cultural barriers that prevent women from accessing available services, underscoring the need for community-based interventions that address stigma alongside strengthening institutional responses.

### **Intersections with Disability and Indigenous Status**

Women with disabilities face compounded vulnerabilities to violence, with limited disaggregated data available to assess prevalence patterns. The overall exclusion of women and

girls with disabilities from decision-making processes concerning matters affecting them exacerbates their vulnerability to violence and limits their access to appropriate support services.

Indigenous women encounter specific challenges related to geographic isolation, cultural barriers, and limited access to formal justice systems. The COVID-19 pandemic particularly impacted these groups, with UNFPA estimating an additional 12,000 cases of gender-based violence occurred monthly during quarantine periods, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities.

### 4.3. SDG5.3: Eliminate Harmful Practices

#### Child Marriage and Early Union Patterns

The Philippines has made substantial progress in reducing child marriage rates, with significant decreases recorded across both age categories monitored under SDG5.3 (**Table 6**). The proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married before age 15 declined from 2.2 percent in 2017 to 1.5 percent in 2022, with the ambitious target of reaching 0.0 percent by 2030. Marriage before age 18 decreased more dramatically, from 16.5 percent in 2017 to 9.4 percent in 2022.

**Table 6. Child marriage trends (2017-2022)**

Age Category	2017 Baseline (%)	2022 Latest (%)	2030 Target (%)	Data Source
Married before age 15	2.2	1.5	0.0	NDHS, PSA
Married before age 18	16.5	9.4	0.0	NDHS, PSA

Source: PSA SDG Watch

This progress reflects the impact of the Prohibition of Child Marriages Act (Republic Act 11861) enacted in 2022, which raised the minimum age of marriage to 18 years and criminalized child marriage practices. The law represents a significant policy milestone, providing clear legal frameworks for prevention and prosecution of child marriages.

Regional variations persist, with rural and IP communities experiencing higher rates of child marriage due to poverty, limited educational opportunities, and cultural practices. The implementation of the new legislation requires sustained efforts to change social norms and address the underlying drivers of child marriage, particularly in marginalized communities.

Interviews with civil society organizations working in remote and marginalized communities suggest that child marriage intersects with poverty, limited educational opportunities, and cultural practices in ways that require comprehensive, community-based approaches.

Teenage pregnancy rates, the proportion of women aged 15-19 years who have ever been pregnant, are a critical concern intersecting with harmful practices and early unions. Teenage pregnancy is often linked to early marriage patterns, limited access to comprehensive sexuality education, and restrictions on contraceptive access for minors. These patterns disproportionately affect girls from marginalized communities, including those with disabilities and IPs, creating intergenerational cycles of disadvantage that require targeted intervention approaches addressing both immediate health needs and underlying structural barriers.

## **Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Data**

Limited data exists on female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in the Philippines, as this practice is not traditionally prevalent across most Filipino communities. However, some evidence suggests isolated cases may occur within specific ethnic groups, particularly in southern regions with different cultural practices. The absence of comprehensive national data on this indicator reflects its limited prevalence rather than data collection gaps.

## **Cultural Transformation Initiatives**

The Philippines has implemented various cultural transformation initiatives targeting harmful practices, with particular focus on changing social norms around child marriage and gender-based violence. The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Act and related programs address the complex relationships between early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and educational discontinuation.

Community-based interventions work with traditional leaders, religious organizations, and local government units to promote alternative practices that respect cultural values while protecting children's rights. These initiatives require sustained investment and culturally sensitive approaches that engage communities as partners in transformation rather than subjects of intervention.

### **4.4. *SDG5.4: Recognize and Value Unpaid Care Work***

#### **Time-Use Survey Findings in the Philippines**

The recognition and valuation of unpaid care work remains a critical challenge in the Philippines, with limited comprehensive time-use survey data available to track progress on SDG5.4. Early recognition of this issue led the then National Statistical Coordination Board (now consolidated within the PSA) to conduct a study that showed that unpaid care and domestic work contributes up to 37 percent of GDP, which prompted the design of a pilot time-use survey in 1999-2000 (ILO and UNDP 2018). However, this pilot revealed significant methodological and cost challenges, with the survey being deemed lengthy, tedious, and prohibitively expensive at an estimated cost of 1.1 billion pesos for national implementation.

Multiple data sources now provide evidence of substantial gender disparities in care work. Examination of the 2000 time-use survey by Abrigo and Francisco-Abrigo (2019) showed that women in their mid-thirties spending an average of 24 hours per week on housework alone compared to just 8 hours for men. International Social Survey Programme data reveals a narrowing but persistent gap, with women spending 27 and 31 hours per week on housework and care work respectively in 2012 (12-13 hours more than men), declining to 23 hours per week in 2022 (10-9 hours more than men). The National Household Care Survey (NHCS), conducted by Oxfam Philippines in partnership with Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) UN Women, WeEmpowerAsia and others, found that women spend up to 13 hours per day on care work, five hours more than men (Rost and Koissy-Kpein 2018). When combining market work with care responsibilities, women consistently work significantly more total hours than men despite having fewer financial resources. This disparity significantly impacts women's labor force participation and economic opportunities.

The burden of unpaid care work serves as a primary factor limiting women's economic participation, with gendered social norms assigning women primary responsibility for childcare and household management. The NHCS data shows some positive trends during the COVID-19 pandemic, with men's participation in care work increasing notably from 5.4 hours to 8 hours per day between 2017 and 2021, while women's care hours remained relatively stable at around 12-13 hours per day (Rost and Koissy-Kpein 2018). This pattern intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, when women faced increased unpaid care burdens due to school closures and heightened health precautions, though the pandemic also created opportunities for greater male participation in household work as employment patterns shifted.

The data consistently shows that households with children under six years old spend significantly more time on care work, with this burden disproportionately affecting women. These findings underscore the ongoing need for an official national time-use survey to continue the work initially piloted in 2000, as current data collection through the LFS (that started in April 2019) captures only limited aspects of unpaid care work activities.

Corporate leadership perspectives highlight the ongoing challenges women face in balancing professional responsibilities with family demands. As one executive noted about observing her colleagues, "if it was up to me, I would really recognize the importance of family, and especially family milestones" rather than expecting women to prioritize work over significant family events that cannot be replicated.

Platform work should be able to provide more flexible time for work, with some platform workers reporting different time allocation patterns for housework and care work compared to traditional employment arrangements. This suggests that digital economy opportunities may be reshaping household labor dynamics in ways that require updated measurement approaches.

Interviews with female corporate leaders suggest that progressive approaches to work-life integration can benefit both employees and organizational outcomes. Successful approaches emphasize output-driven flexibility that recognizes family milestones as legitimate priorities. One leader noted implementing an approach where "Work when you're working. But when you're with your family, spend time with your family" resulted in teams that were "so successful, so productive, and everybody's happy because everyone feels supported."

### **Care Infrastructure Development**

The Philippines has made limited progress in developing comprehensive care infrastructure to support unpaid care work recognition and redistribution. Childcare services remain inadequate to meet demand, particularly for low-income families who cannot access private services. The absence of comprehensive elderly care systems places additional burdens on families, predominantly affecting women who serve as primary caregivers.

While the Philippines institutionalized universal kindergarten through Republic Act No. 10157 (The Kindergarten Education Act of 2012), mandating free and compulsory kindergarten education for all five-year-old children, assessments reveal significant implementation gaps that perpetuate regional gender inequalities (Republic of the Philippines 2012). Although DepEd's Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy requires gender-sensitive approaches from kindergarten through senior high school, systematic evaluation shows that comprehensive care infrastructure development remains insufficient (Department of Education 2019). The required services for children with special needs in general education remain unavailable in

nearly all public schools, with the entire Philippine education system lacking the knowledge and resources required for high-quality inclusion, particularly affecting children in remote, rural locations that coincide with regions showing the highest gender inequality in labor force participation (Muega 2016). For SY 2023-2024, an estimated shortfall of 7,651 teachers for 323,344 enrolled students with disabilities, aged two to 17, was flagged during a Senate oversight review of Republic Act No. 11650, also known as Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act (Senate of the Philippines 2024).

The effectiveness of early childhood development programs varies dramatically across regions. Urban regions like NCR, which demonstrate higher female labor force participation and better digital access, also show more effective implementation of inclusive kindergarten programs. Conversely, regions like BARMM, SOCCSKSARGEN, and Eastern Visayas—which show persistent gender gaps in labor market participation and higher fertility rates—face substantial barriers in providing quality early childhood services. A 2023 evaluation of inclusive kindergarten programs in Davao City found high implementation levels with 61%-80% of target indicators achieved, but this success pattern is not consistently replicated across regions, particularly in conflict-affected and geographically isolated areas (Bongabong et al. 2023).

The 4Ps, the country's conditional cash transfer, while covering about 4 million beneficiaries and including early childhood development components, reveals the persistent challenges in addressing intersectional barriers (Department of Social Welfare and Development 2023). Indigenous children participating in the 4Ps demonstrate higher dropout rates compared to non-indigenous children, with the ADB reporting that distance, early marriage, and children working are more common reasons for school departure among this population (ADB 2019). Additional evidence suggests that children with disabilities and those in conflict-affected areas also face significant barriers to program compliance, indicating challenges in addressing intersectional vulnerabilities within universal social assistance programs.

Recent policy developments include expanded maternity leave benefits and some recognition of care responsibilities in workplace policies. However, systematic investment in care infrastructure remains limited, requiring coordinated efforts across multiple sectors to address the structural barriers that perpetuate gendered care responsibilities. The regional variations in both early childhood service quality and women's labor force participation demonstrate how inadequate care infrastructure compounds geographic disadvantages, creating intersecting barriers that affect women in rural, conflict-affected, and economically marginalized regions.

### **Economic Valuation Methodologies**

Limited efforts have been made to develop systematic economic valuation methodologies for unpaid care work in the Philippines. Using the National Transfer Account (NTA) and National Time Transfer Account (NTTA) frameworks, Abrigo and Francisco-Abrigo (2019) show that including the value of unpaid home production brings women's total economic contribution much closer to that of men—reducing the apparent gender disparity that emerges when only market-paid work is counted. In 2015, paid work in the Philippines amounted to PhP 9.3 trillion (with women contributing 40%), while unpaid work—mostly performed by women—was valued at PhP 2.5 trillion (76% women). When both are combined, total production reaches PhP 11.8 trillion, with women accounting for 47% of all work.

The inclusion of unpaid care work in national accounting systems remains incomplete, undermining policy recognition of its economic significance. International evidence suggests that unpaid care work represents substantial economic value, but Philippine-specific valuations require additional research and methodological development.

#### 4.5. SDG5.5: Ensure Women's Participation in Leadership

##### Political Representation Trends at All Levels

Women's political representation in the Philippines shows mixed progress across different levels of government, with some improvements offset by persistent challenges in achieving gender parity. According to the 2024 SDG Watch data (**Table 7**), women's representation in national parliament remained relatively stable at 26.8 percent in 2022, compared to 28.0 percent in 2016, falling way short of the 50 percent target for 2030. The challenge extends beyond electoral outcomes to candidacy patterns themselves. Historical data from the Commission on Elections reveals that from 2004 to 2016, women comprised only 17 percent of national and local candidates, with approximately the same proportion winning elections, indicating that the primary barrier is not voter discrimination but rather insufficient female participation in electoral politics (David et al. 2017).

**Table 7. Women's political representation by level of government (2016-2022)**

Level of Government	2016 Baseline (%)	2022 Latest (%)	2030 Target (%)	Data Source
National Parliament	28.0	26.8	50.0	ERSD, COMELEC
Provincial	19.7	23.5	50.0	ERSD, COMELEC
City	21.2	25.7	50.0	ERSD, COMELEC
Municipal	22.4	23.0	50.0	ERSD, COMELEC
Barangay	29.3	29.3	50.0	LFS, PSA
Managerial Positions	48.9	45.6	50.0	

Source: PSA SDG Watch

Historical context illuminates the relatively recent nature of women's political participation in the Philippines. The 1935 Constitution initially denied Filipino women the right to suffrage, limiting voting rights to men aged 21 and older who could read and write. However, the Constitution provided a pathway for women's enfranchisement through a special plebiscite requiring at least 300,000 female votes in favor. On April 30, 1937, with 447,725 votes, the National Assembly granted Filipino women both voting rights and eligibility for public office. Carmen Planas became the first woman to hold elected office in the Philippines that same year, winning a seat on Manila's city council.

Local government representation varies significantly across different positions and levels. While barangay-level representation achieves the highest levels of female participation at 29.3 percent, all levels of government remain significantly below the 50 percent parity target for 2030. Provincial representation increased from 19.7 percent in 2016 to 23.5 percent in 2022, while city-level representation rose from 21.2 percent to 25.7 percent over the same period. Municipal representation remained stable at approximately 23 percent, while barangay representation achieved the highest levels at 29.3 percent. The situation in the Philippine Senate demonstrates particular challenges, with female representation fluctuating between three to six senators out of 24 seats since 2001. Recent Senates have achieved the highest proportion of female representation at 25 percent, yet leadership positions remain largely inaccessible to women. Since the 12th Congress in 2001, only one female senator, Loren

Legarda, has served in a leadership position as majority leader, while no woman has ever assumed the ranks of Senate President or House Speaker. This suggests the need for targeted interventions to support women's candidacies in high-profile electoral contests.

Systemic issues such as the absence of gender quotas in electoral and corporate systems exacerbate the leadership gap (David et al. 2017), thus underscoring the critical need for targeted mentorship programs and leadership training initiatives to address these gaps and prepare women for senior roles. Efforts to address these gender gaps in leadership have included initiatives such as leadership training programs and policies aimed at promoting gender parity. However, these interventions require scaling up to achieve meaningful impact. The lack of gender quotas in electoral politics and corporate boards remains a critical gap in policy design. Advocating for more inclusive practices and fostering supportive environments for women leaders are essential steps to bridging the leadership divide and ensuring that women can contribute fully to the country's development goals.

Under the 2023 Bangsamoro Electoral Code (BARMM 2023), regional political parties must nominate at least 30% women (12 out of 40 candidates) for parliamentary and party-list seats—providing a structured mechanism to elevate female representation—while also allocating one reserved seat in the 80-member Parliament exclusively for the Women Sector. For sectoral seats, such as those for Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples (NMIPs), gender balance is enforced through requirements like at least 50% female delegates and nominees, weaving comprehensive quotas throughout the system. As the inaugural elections—originally slated for 2025—have been postponed to 2026 amid legal challenges, rigorously tracking how these thresholds convert into elected positions will be vital for assessing the reform's impact on substantive gender inclusivity.

## **Executive Branch Representation and Sectoral Patterns**

Women's representation in Philippine cabinet-level positions since 1986 reveals distinct sectoral patterns reflecting traditional gender role expectations (even during periods when the president was female). While these executive posts remain predominantly male-dominated, representation varies significantly across departments. Women achieve relatively high representation levels in sectors traditionally associated with female roles: Health (27.8%), Tourism (52.9%<sup>4</sup>), and Social Welfare and Development (70.6%<sup>5</sup>). Conversely, they remain significantly underrepresented in areas often considered economically critical: Finance (5.9%), Foreign Affairs (21.4%), Budget and Management (36.3%<sup>6</sup>), and Economic Planning (11.1%). Furthermore, several key departments—Agriculture, National Defense<sup>7</sup>, Interior and Local Government, and Public Works and Highways—have never been headed by a woman since 1986.

These patterns demonstrate the persistent occupational segregation that characterizes executive branch leadership. The DSWD stands as a particularly notable case, having historically appointed only female secretaries since 1986, though recent appointments may have altered this pattern. The concentration of women in traditionally "care-oriented" departments while

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<sup>4</sup> Narzalina Lim is counted twice having been appointed Tourism Secretary under President Corazon C. Aquino (in 1989), and President Fidel V. Ramos (in 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Corazon Soliman is counted twice having been appointed Social Welfare and Development Secretary under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (in 2001-2005), and President Benigno S. Aquino III (in 2010-2016).

<sup>6</sup> Emilia Boncodin is counted twice having been appointed Budget Secretary under President Fidel V. Ramos (in 1998) and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (in 2001-2005).

<sup>7</sup> President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared herself as Acting Defense Secretary twice in September 1, 2003- October 2, 2003 and in November 30, 2006-February 1, 2007.

their exclusion from economic and security portfolios reflects broader societal gender stereotypes that continue to influence high-level governmental appointments. These patterns demonstrate the persistent occupational segregation in executive leadership, where women remain concentrated in departments traditionally viewed as extensions of caregiving roles while being systematically excluded from positions controlling economic policy and national security. The complete absence of female leadership in Agriculture, Defense, Interior and Local Government, and Public Works reflects deeply entrenched gender stereotypes about women's capabilities in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

### **Corporate Leadership Patterns and Barriers**

According to data from the PSA's SDG Watch, women's representation in managerial positions decreased from 48.9 percent in 2016 to 45.6 percent in 2023, indicating concerning trends in private sector leadership despite the Philippines' generally strong performance in gender equality metrics. This decline reflects broader regional patterns documented in enterprise survey data, which shows that the proportion of firms with female top managers in the Philippines decreased from 32.7 percent in 2009 to 29.9 percent in 2015. This decline suggests that economic and structural barriers continue to impede women's advancement to senior corporate positions. Despite this declining trend, the Philippines maintains relatively strong performance compared to regional neighbors, with female participation in company ownership remaining stable at approximately 69 percent throughout the same period, significantly higher than other ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

Female participation in company ownership remained relatively stable at approximately 69 percent, suggesting that ownership and management roles may follow different patterns. Analysis of the Philippine Stock Exchange's 200 highest market-capitalized companies reveals that Filipino women occupy 30 percent of top executive positions, typically concentrated in roles such as treasurers, corporate secretaries, and finance managers. Companies with women serving as chair or president tend to cluster in retail, food, and pharmacy sectors, with some individuals holding multiple positions across related companies within business groups.

Interviews reveal complex dynamics around women's advancement to senior leadership positions across sectors in the corporate world. In the construction and manufacturing sectors, while gender parity exists at vice president levels and below, executive positions remain overwhelmingly male territory. One corporate leader noted being "the only female Chief Operating Officer within the Construction Materials Group" of the firm where "the entire executive committee remains exclusively male."

Women in senior positions report that success requires navigating careful balance, with senior management often preferring colleagues who mirror established communication styles. This creates pressure to translate innovative, holistic approaches into "McKinsey-speak" to ensure acceptance by male-dominated leadership teams.

### **Civil Society and Community Leadership Patterns**

Women's leadership in civil society organizations and community-based groups represents an area of relative strength for the Philippines, though comprehensive data remains limited. Women's organizations play crucial roles in advocacy, service delivery, and community mobilization, particularly in areas related to health, education, and social services. The Philippine Women Judges Association exemplifies successful institutional mechanisms for

promoting women's leadership in specific sectors. The judiciary achieved near gender parity with 43.8 percent of judge positions occupied by women in 2015, representing dramatic improvement from 19.7 percent in 2000.

### **Structural Barriers and Systemic Challenges**

The persistence of political dynasties presents a particular challenge for women's political participation, as current power dynamics tend to exclude non-dynastic candidates regardless of gender. The concentration of political power within family networks creates additional barriers for women seeking to enter politics without established political connections. Empirical studies reveal that political dynasties play a significant role in facilitating women's entry into the Philippine Congress, potentially explaining the country's relatively higher levels of women's political representation compared to regional neighbors. Mendoza et al. (2012) found that approximately 70% of legislators in the 15th Congress belonged to political dynasties, with the proportion of female legislators who are dynastic being comparable to that of male legislators—specifically, 72% of female representatives versus 66.5% of male representatives under their comprehensive dynasty definition. This pattern is even more pronounced in the Senate, where analysis of senatorial representation from 1987 to 2023 found that 64.7% of women senators had dynastic ties compared to only 36.2% of male senators (Gem 2025). Labonne et al. (2017) further demonstrate that dynastic women are 240% more likely to access political office during critical junctures created by binding term limits. However, these findings must be interpreted with important caveats. Definitions of "political dynasty", however vary considerably across studies—some researchers focus exclusively on congressional family ties while others incorporate relationships with local government officials, leading to different prevalence estimates ranging from 50% to 70% of legislators (Mendoza et al. 2012). Additionally, comprehensive gender-disaggregated dynasty data are not consistently available across all congressional sessions, limiting longitudinal analysis of these patterns. Despite such limitations, dynasties provide a structural constraint to leadership, and this becomes especially significant when considering potential constitutional changes such as federalism, which could further entrench existing power dynamics unless accompanied by comprehensive political reforms designed to promote greater inclusivity.

### **Women's Professional Networks and Support Systems**

Interview findings highlight the critical importance of women-supporting-women networks in advancing leadership opportunities. These organizations demonstrate the transformative potential of sisterhood-driven networking, where members genuinely support each other's businesses and advocacies. This collaborative environment has propelled many participants into board positions, government senior roles, and industry recognition.

Traditional mixed-gender organizations, however present more complex dynamics. Experience with organizations that are non-gender exclusive show that women in Finance committees face membership reduction despite "diversity and inclusion" themes, illustrates how female executives often remain silent about gender issues due to job security concerns, perceiving that "rocking the boat" could jeopardize their positions.

#### **4.6. SDG5.6: Universal Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health**

### **Healthcare Access Patterns by Geographic Location**

Access to sexual and reproductive health services varies significantly across geographic regions in the Philippines, with rural and remote areas experiencing substantial disparities. The proportion of women aged 15-49 years currently using contraception who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive health care increased from 79.8 percent in 2017 to 82.3 percent in 2022, with a target of 92.7 percent by 2030 (**Table 8**).

**Table 8. Sexual and reproductive health indicators (2017-2022)**

Indicator	2017 Baseline (%)	2022 Latest (%)	2030 Target (%)	Data Source
Women making informed SRH decisions	79.8	82.3	92.7	NDHS, PSA
Laws guaranteeing equal SRH access (15-18 years)	0	0	1	DOH
Laws guaranteeing equal SRH access (18+ years)	1	1	1	DOH
Teenage pregnancy rate (%)	-	5.4	<5.0	NDHS, PSA

Source: PSA SDG Watch

As of 2013, only 51.5 percent of women of reproductive age had their family planning needs met, compared to a Southeast Asian average of 71.4 percent. This disparity reflects persistent challenges in implementing the Reproductive Health Law despite its passage in 2012.

### Adolescent Pregnancy Trends and Interventions

The Philippines maintains one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates in the Southeast Asian region, with significant implications for girls' educational attainment and economic opportunities. The national teenage pregnancy rate of 5.4 percent in 2022 masks substantial variations by education level, administrative region, and socioeconomic status.

Teenage pregnancy creates cascading effects on girls' retention in secondary education, limiting economic opportunities and increasing health risks for both mothers and children. Despite overall declining fertility rates, the persistence of teenage pregnancies represents a form of violence against girls that perpetuates cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

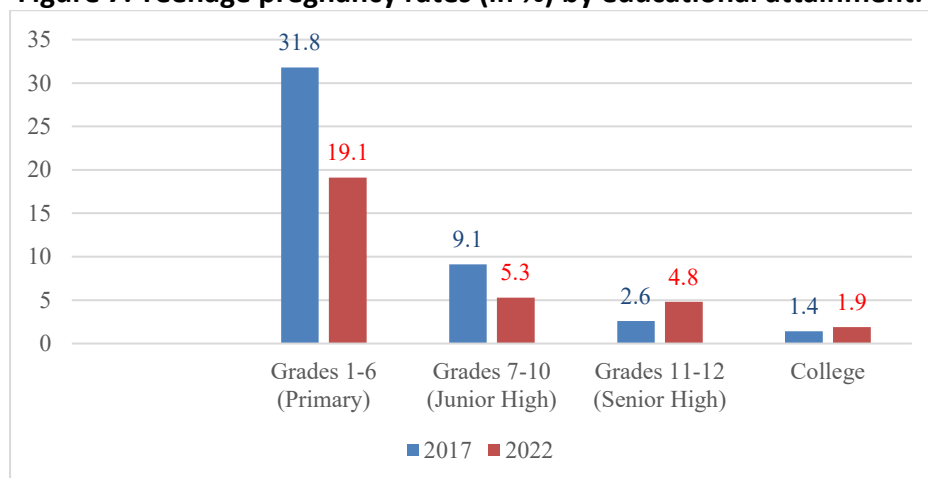
The 2022 NDHS reveals some reductions in teenage pregnancy rates across the Philippines, with the national rate declining from 8.6 percent in 2017 to 5.4 percent in 2022. This 3.2 percentage point decrease represents a significant improvement in teenage pregnancy reduction, suggesting that policy interventions and social programs implemented during this period have had measurable impact on adolescent reproductive health outcomes. These survey findings are further corroborated by vital registration data from the PSA's Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system, which demonstrates a consistent downward trend in the proportion of registered live births from teenage mothers over the past decade (**Table 9**). According to CRVS data, the share of births to mothers aged 19 and below declined steadily from 11.7 percent in 2016 to 10.0 percent in 2021, representing a 1.7 percentage point reduction in the teenage birth proportion during this six-year period. This parallel decline in both survey-measured teenage pregnancy rates and administratively recorded teenage birth proportions provides robust evidence that the reduction in adolescent childbearing reflects genuine demographic changes.

**Table 9. Registered live births by maternal age in the Philippines (2016-2021)**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of Registered Live Births	1,731,289	1,700,618	1,668,120	1,673,923	1,528,684	1,364,739
Total Births to Mothers Aged Under 15	1,903	2,077	2,250	2,411	2,113	2,320
Total Births to Mothers Aged 15-19	201,182	194,401	181,717	178,505	154,947	133,982
Total Births to Teenage Mothers (19 and below)	203,085	196,478	183,967	180,916	157,060	136,302
Proportion of Births from Teenage Mothers (%)	11.7	11.6	11.0	10.8	10.3	10.0

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

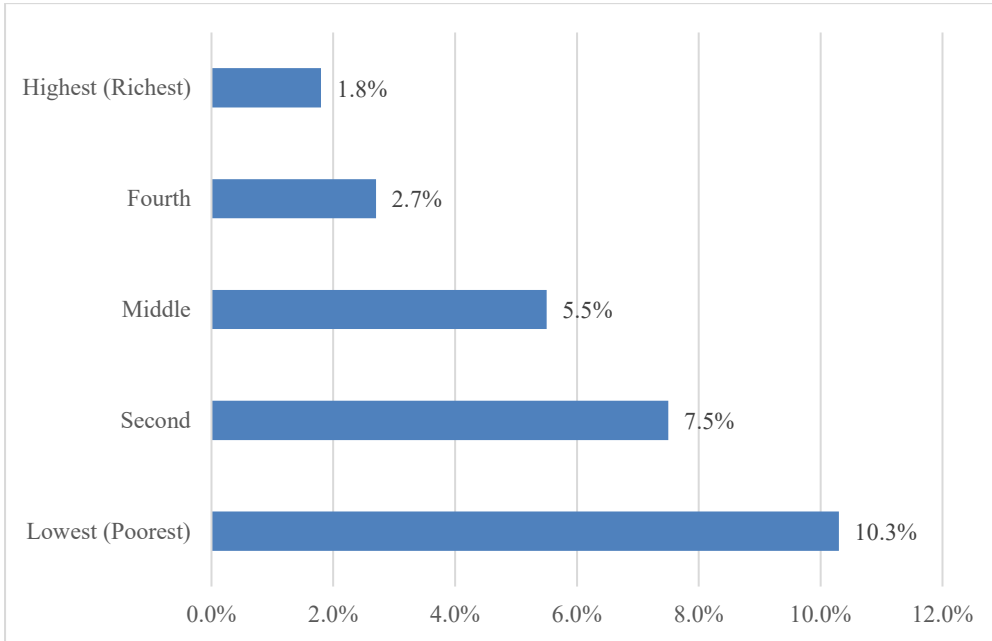
Despite overall declines in teenage pregnancy, socioeconomic and educational disparities remain. Rates are still highest among young women with only primary education, although they have declined substantially from 31.8 percent in 2017 to 19.1 percent in 2022 (**Figure 7**). Junior high school completers also experienced a drop (9.1 % to 5.3 %). By contrast, small increases were observed among senior high school (2.6 % to 4.8 %) and college-level students (1.4 % to 1.9 %). These increases should be interpreted with caution: they are likely due to improvements in reporting and the rising share of adolescents progressing to higher education levels, rather than a reversal of the well-established negative association between educational attainment and teenage pregnancy (Macapagal et al. 2021).

**Figure 7. Teenage pregnancy rates (in %) by educational attainment: 2017 and 2022**

Source: 2017 and 2022 National Demographic and Health Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority

**Figure 8** demonstrates the persistent inverse relationship between economic status and teenage pregnancy risk. The visual shows a clear gradient where teenagers from the poorest households face teenage pregnancy rates of 10.3 percent, which progressively decrease through each wealth quintile to reach just 1.8 percent among the wealthiest families. This pattern underscores the continued importance of poverty as a fundamental determinant of adolescent reproductive health outcomes, with teenagers from the lowest quintile experiencing rates nearly six times higher than those from the highest quintile. The middle quintile rate of 5.5 percent closely mirrors the national average, suggesting that socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in determining individual risk levels even within the context of overall national improvements.

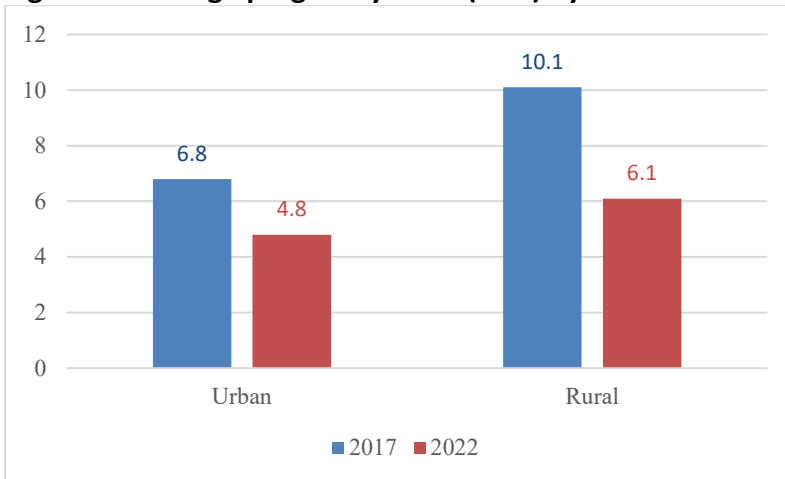
**Figure 8. Teenage pregnancy rates (in %) by wealth quintile: 2022**



Source: 2022 National Demographic and Health Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority

Rural-urban disparities shown in **Figure 9** continue to reflect longstanding geographic inequalities in teenage pregnancy rates, though both areas experienced meaningful improvements between 2017 and 2022.

**Figure 9. Teenage pregnancy rates (in %) by residence: 2017 and 2022**



Source: 2017 and 2022 National Demographic and Health Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority

Rural areas maintained higher rates at 6.1 percent compared to urban areas at 4.8 percent in 2022, but rural areas actually achieved a larger absolute reduction of 4.0 percentage points compared to 2.0 percentage points in urban areas. This pattern suggests that rural-focused interventions may be having particular success, though the persistent gap indicates that rural teenagers continue to face distinct challenges related to healthcare access, educational opportunities, and economic constraints that influence reproductive health outcomes. The continued rural-urban disparity of 1.3 percentage points, while narrower than in previous years, highlights the ongoing need for geographically targeted approaches that address the specific circumstances and barriers faced by rural adolescents.

Regional patterns shown in **Table 10** demonstrate that the majority of regions experienced substantial decreases, though the improvements were far from uniform across the archipelago. The most remarkable regional transformation occurred in the Ilocos Region, which recorded the steepest decline from 13.2 percent to 2.4 percent—a reduction of 10.8 percentage points that moved the region from having one of the highest rates to sharing the lowest rate nationally. SOCCSKSARGEN followed closely with a 10.7 percentage point decrease from 14.5 percent to 3.8 percent, while Davao Region achieved a substantial 9.7 percentage point reduction from 17.9 percent to 8.2 percent. These dramatic improvements in previously high-performing regions suggest that targeted interventions can achieve significant results when properly implemented and sustained.

**Table 10. Percentage of women aged 15-19 years who have ever been pregnant by region, Philippines: 2017 and 2022**

Region	2017	2022	Change (percentage points)
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>-3.2</b>
NCR	2.8	2.8	0.0
CAR	3.5	6.1	+2.6
Ilocos Region (I)	13.2	2.4	-10.8
Cagayan Valley (II)	5.6	5.8	+0.2
Central Luzon (III)	8.9	8.0	-0.9
CALABARZON (IVA)	9.2	4.9	-4.3
MIMAROPA	10.3	5.0	-5.3
Bicol Region (V)	4.4	2.4	-2.0
Western Visayas (VI)	5.3	6.6	+1.3
Central Visayas (VII)	7.4	4.8	-2.6
Eastern Visayas (VIII)	6.9	4.9	-2.0
Zamboanga Peninsula (IX)	7.5	7.1	-0.4
Northern Mindanao (X)	7.1	10.9	+3.8
Davao Region (XI)	17.9	8.2	-9.7
SOCCSKSARGEN (XII)	14.5	3.8	-10.7
Caraga (XIII)	8.5	7.7	-0.8
BARMM	8.2	6.6	-1.6

Source: 2017 and 2022 National Demographic and Health Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority

The data, however, also reveals concerning counter-trends in specific regions that bucked the national improvement pattern. The Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) experienced the most significant increase, with teenage pregnancy rates rising from 3.5 percent in 2017 to 6.1 percent in 2022—a 2.6 percentage point increase that made CAR the region with the highest increase nationwide. Western Visayas also recorded an upward trend, increasing from 5.3 percent to 6.6 percent, while Northern Mindanao showed a substantial rise from 7.1 percent to 10.9 percent, making it the region with the highest absolute teenage pregnancy rate in 2022. These regional increases highlight the importance of understanding local factors that may be contributing to different outcomes despite national-level improvements.

Stakeholder interviews highlight innovative approaches to addressing teenage pregnancy through coordinated programming. Successful interventions in provinces like Palawan demonstrate the effectiveness of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health programming. One NGO leader praised the work of Roots of Health in Palawan, noting that "Palawan used

to have one of the highest numbers of teenage pregnancy rates in the Philippines, and in just how many years they've successfully, really lowered the number" through coordinated community-based approaches.

Government agencies are exploring innovative approaches to further preventing teenage pregnancies, with social protection programs beginning to test and evaluate approaches to enhance impact on teenage pregnancy prevention alongside existing conditional cash transfer programs.

### **Family Planning Service Utilization**

Family planning service utilization remains below international standards despite legal frameworks supporting universal access. The delayed implementation of the Reproductive Health Law, including temporary restraining orders on contraceptive procurement that were only lifted in 2017, contributed to persistent gaps in service availability.

Maternal mortality rates of 114 per 100,000 births in 2015 exceeded regional averages and reflected inadequate access to comprehensive reproductive health services. The absence of comprehensive sexuality education and limited access to modern contraceptives continue to impact women's reproductive autonomy and health outcomes.

### **Service Access, Institutional Barriers, and Innovation in Service Delivery**

Limited access to sexual and reproductive health programming are a significant issue according to civil society organizations due to both institutional and cultural resistance. NGO leaders working directly with marginalized communities emphasize that effective economic empowerment programming for women must address reproductive health as a foundational element. As one leader noted, "before we even do economic empowerment for women, that's one of the many things. They have 5, 6, 7, 8 children, and it's very hard, you know."

Successful models demonstrate the potential for dramatic improvements in reproductive outcomes through comprehensive, community-based approaches. Evidence from organizations like Roots of Health in Palawan shows that coordinated community engagement can significantly reduce teenage pregnancy rates even in previously high-prevalence areas, suggesting that comprehensive approaches addressing both individual and structural factors can achieve substantial impact.

### **Intersectional Analysis of Health and Reproductive Outcomes**

Analysis of NDHS data reveals how multiple identities compound to create unique patterns of disadvantage in health outcomes. While national averages show improvement in key indicators, disaggregated analysis exposes persistent inequalities that affect women differently based on their intersection of age, education, wealth, and geographic location. This intersectional lens is critical for understanding how the experience of teenage pregnancy for an Indigenous girl in rural Mindanao differs fundamentally from that of an urban, educated young woman in Metro Manila, requiring differentiated policy responses rather than universal approaches.

Teenage pregnancy rates from 1993-2022 (**Table 11**) demonstrate how geographic location and educational attainment interact to create distinctive reproductive health outcomes. Overall rates followed a "hill-shaped" trajectory, rising from 6.5% in 1993 to peak levels around 2008-

2013 (9.9%-10.1%), followed by dramatic improvement to 5.3% by 2022 - the lowest rate in the entire 30-year period. This recent decline suggests successful policy interventions, with all subgroups experiencing substantial improvements between 2017-2022.

**Table 11. Teenage pregnancy rates by residence and by education: 1993-2022**

Year	Total	Residence		Education (2 groups)	
		Urban	Rural	No education or primary	Secondary or higher
2022	5.3	4.6	5.9	16.4	4.9
2017	8.6	6.8	10.1	31.4	7
2013	10.1	9.5	10.9	23.3	8.6
2008	9.9	7.8	12.5	17.7	8.6
2003	8	6	10.7	20.2	6
1998	7.2	4.7	10.8	16	5.5
1993	6.5	4.8	8.9	13.6	4.8

Source: NDHS, PSA

Geographic and educational disparities reveal persistent intersectional disadvantages throughout the period. Rural areas consistently maintained higher rates than urban areas, though the gap narrowed from 4.7 percentage points in 2008 to 1.3 percentage points by 2022. However, educational disparities represent the most pronounced inequality, with women having no education or primary education only experiencing rates 3-4 times higher than those with secondary or higher education. Even with recent improvements, the educational gap remains substantial at 11.5 percentage points in 2022 (16.4% vs 4.9%).

The intersectional nature of these disparities is evident in how multiple disadvantages compound vulnerability. While the data doesn't provide cross-tabulated breakdowns, the patterns suggest that rural women with limited education face multiplicative rather than additive risks. Significantly, the largest absolute improvements occurred among the most disadvantaged groups - women with limited education experienced a 15.0 percentage point decline between 2017-2022, suggesting that targeted interventions recognizing intersectional barriers may be more effective than universal approaches. This longitudinal pattern exemplifies why disaggregated data analysis is essential for understanding how multiple forms of marginalization interact to shape reproductive health outcomes and designing appropriately differentiated policy responses.

## 5. Progress on SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities)

### 5.1. SDG10.1: Income Growth for Bottom 40 Percent

#### Income Distribution Trends 2015-2025

The Philippines has made significant progress in achieving inclusive economic growth, with income growth for the bottom 40 percent of the population outpacing overall national growth rates. According to 2024 SDG Watch data (**Table 12**), the growth rate of household income per capita among the bottom 40 percent reached 10.6 percent in 2023, substantially exceeding the total population growth rate of 8.6 percent. This positive trend indicates that economic growth has become more inclusive, with the poorest segments of society experiencing faster income improvements.

**Table 12. Income growth rates and inequality measures**

Indicator	2015 Baseline	2023 Latest	2030 Target	Data Source
Bottom 40% income growth rate (%)	7.4	10.6	>8.6	FIES, PSA
Total population income growth rate (%)	5.0	8.6	<10.6	FIES, PSA
Population below 50% median income (%)	17.6	15.2	10.5	FIES, PSA

Source: PSA SDG Watch

However, income inequality, while decreasing, remains a persistent and substantial challenge that undermines the sustainability of development gains (**Table 13**). The Gini coefficient—a comprehensive measure of income inequality—stands at 0.406 as of 2023 for family income, representing a steady decline from official figures since 2015.

**Table 13. Select measures of per capita income inequality in the Philippines: 2015-2021**

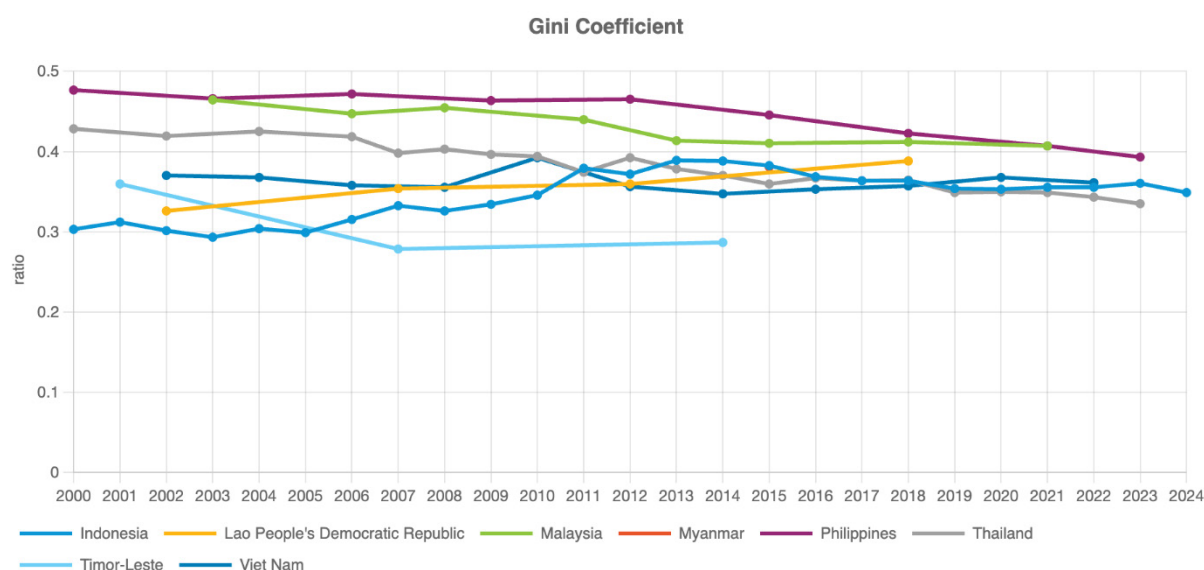
Inequality Measures	2015	2018	2021	2023
Share (in %) of Bottom 20 Percent in National Income	5.43	5.93	6.17	6.47
Palma ratio (i.e., income of the top 10% to bottom 40%)	2.45	2.17	2.03	1.91
Gini	0.453	0.430	0.417	0.406

Note: Authors' calculations on microdata of the 2015 Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES), 2018 FIES, 2021 FIES, and 2023 FIES, conducted by the PSA

The Palma ratio, measuring the income share of the top 10 percent relative to the bottom 40 percent, declined consistently from 2.45 in 2015 to 2.17 in 2018, then further to 2.03 in 2021 and 1.91 in 2023. The Gini coefficient showed a consistent downward trend, decreasing from 0.453 in 2015 to 0.430 in 2018, continuing to decline to 0.417 in 2021, and reaching 0.406 in 2023, indicating sustained improvements in income distribution over the eight-year period. These consistent improvements suggest that economic growth has been accompanied by meaningful distributional gains, with the bottom 20 percent of the population increasing their share of national income from 5.43 percent in 2015 to 6.47 percent in 2023. However, despite this progress, the structural factors driving inequality concentration remain significant and require continued policy attention to ensure these positive trends are sustained.

Despite this sustained improvement in reducing income inequality, the Philippines continues to rank among the most unequal societies in Southeast Asia, highlighting the magnitude of distributional challenges that persist alongside economic growth (**Figure 10**). It is important to note that official statistics in the Philippines and Malaysia calculate inequality measures based on household income rather than per capita income, while other Southeast Asian countries examine per capita consumption or expenditure patterns. This methodological difference affects direct comparability of inequality indicators across the region, though the Philippines' position among the most unequal societies in Southeast Asia remains consistent across various measurement approaches. Thus the data in **Figure 10**, from the Key Indicators, makes the data more comparable.

**Figure 10. Gini coefficient in ASEAN member states: 2000-2024**



Source: Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific Database, ADB

Note: Official statistics in the Philippines and Malaysia calculate inequality measures on household income rather than per capita income, while those from other countries examine per capita consumption/expenditure

Income data sourced from FIES spanning nearly a decade (from 2015 to 2023) demonstrates both the persistence of inequality and some modest improvements over time. The richest 20 percent of the population held 203,210 pesos in average per capita income in 2023, compared to 27,606 pesos for the poorest 20 percent (Table 14). This represents an income ratio of nearly 7.4:1 between the highest and lowest income groups. While all income quintiles experienced growth from 2015 to 2023, with the poorest 20 percent seeing their average per capita income increase by 76 percent (from 15,682 to 27,606 pesos), the absolute gap between rich and poor has continued to widen. The richest quintile's income grew by 36 percent over the same period, from 148,924 to 203,210 pesos, meaning that in absolute terms, the income difference between the top and bottom quintiles expanded from 133,242 pesos in 2015 to 175,604 pesos in 2023.

**Table 14. Average per capita income by quintile (2015-2023)**

Income Quintile	2015 (PHP)	2018 (PHP)	2021 (PHP)	2023 (PHP)
Poorest 20%	15,682	20,841	22,428	27,606
Lower Middle 20%	25,927	33,801	36,452	43,920
Middle 20%	38,543	48,773	51,672	61,703
Upper Middle 20%	59,938	73,452	76,512	90,021
Richest 20%	148,924	174,589	176,704	203,210
<b>National Average</b>	<b>57,802</b>	<b>70,291</b>	<b>72,753</b>	<b>85,291</b>

Note: Authors' calculations on microdata of the 2015 Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES), 2018 FIES, 2021 FIES and 2023 FIES, conducted by the PSA

Table 15 presents the merged FIES-LFS data for analysis of the decomposition of inequality of per capita income, disaggregated by location, sex and educational attainment. The decomposition patterns remain relatively stable pre-pandemic to post-pandemic. The estimates of the Gini coefficient for per capita income, has narrowed to 0.408 in 2023, from 0.421 in 2021 and 0.437 in 2018. It is worth noting that these estimates differ slightly from estimates presented in Table 13 because the latter are derived directly from household-level FIES data using household weights, while the merged FIES-LFS file in Table 15 uses individuals as the

unit of analysis with person-level weights. From 2018 to 2023, all three indices of inequality shown in **Table 15** (as well as in **Table 13**) consistently posted marginal declines in the Gini. Likewise, other measures of inequality such as the Theil T and Theil L have also declined, suggesting that the per capita income distribution in the Philippines is becoming more equal, though at a slow pace. This is partly driving the reduction in poverty in recent years, as changes in poverty are either resulting from increased incomes or reduced inequalities.

**Table 15. Inequality decomposition using household per capita income**

Group	Gini			Theil T [GE(1)]			Theil L [GE(0)]		
	2018	2021	2023	2018	2021	2023	2018	2021	2023
<i>Location:</i>									
Urban	0.420	0.405	0.398	0.357	0.321	0.326	0.296	0.274	0.265
Rural	0.417	0.405	0.383	0.347	0.323	0.281	0.285	0.269	0.239
National	0.437	0.421	0.408	0.381	0.344	0.333	0.318	0.294	0.276
Within group inequality				0.353	0.322	0.310	0.291	0.272	0.253
%				92.9%	93.6%	93.1%	91.3%	92.4%	91.5%
Between group inequality				0.027	0.022	0.023	0.028	0.022	0.023
%				7.1%	6.4%	6.9%	8.7%	7.6%	8.5%
<i>Household head sex:</i>									
Male	0.432	0.416	0.404	0.379	0.337	0.326	0.310	0.287	0.270
Female	0.434	0.420	0.405	0.356	0.341	0.330	0.315	0.296	0.273
National	0.437	0.421	0.408	0.381	0.344	0.333	0.318	0.294	0.276
Within group inequality				0.373	0.338	0.327	0.311	0.289	0.271
%				98.0%	98.4%	98.3%	97.7%	98.2%	98.1%
Between group inequality				0.008	0.006	0.006	0.007	0.005	0.005
%				2.0%	1.6%	1.7%	2.3%	1.8%	1.9%
<i>Household head, education:</i>									
No grade completed	0.335	0.322	0.315	0.237	0.198	0.176	0.188	0.171	0.168
Elementary undergraduate	0.335	0.323	0.308	0.217	0.188	0.165	0.184	0.171	0.154
Elementary graduate	0.348	0.329	0.319	0.232	0.191	0.179	0.199	0.177	0.166
High school undergraduate	0.340	0.330	0.354	0.208	0.196	0.283	0.188	0.178	0.207
High school graduate	0.351	0.342	0.343	0.223	0.213	0.217	0.203	0.193	0.193
Post-secondary graduate	0.389	0.353	0.347	0.292	0.225	0.207	0.253	0.207	0.198
College undergraduate	0.372	0.365	0.360	0.252	0.242	0.235	0.234	0.220	0.216
College graduate	0.412	0.408	0.398	0.336	0.318	0.312	0.293	0.286	0.270
Post-graduate	0.439	0.380	0.459	0.441	0.265	0.431	0.332	0.245	0.349
National	0.437	0.421	0.408	0.381	0.344	0.333	0.318	0.294	0.276
Within group inequality				0.261	0.238	0.243	0.211	0.199	0.195
%				68.5%	69.2%	73.0%	66.4%	67.6%	70.6%
Between group inequality				0.120	0.106	0.090	0.107	0.095	0.081
%				31.5%	30.8%	27.0%	33.6%	32.4%	29.4%

Source: Authors' calculations from FIES-LFS 2018, 2021 and 2023.

The decomposition results in **Table 15** reveal that both urban and rural areas exhibit narrowing income gaps. However, urban areas remain more unequal in income compared to rural areas as demonstrated by the consistently higher Gini coefficients for urban areas (0.398) compared to rural areas (0.383) in 2023. **Table 15** shows that within-group inequality for location dominates (91.5% to 93.1% in 2023), while between-group inequality remains small (6.9% to 8.5% in 2023), suggesting that urban-rural income gaps are not the main driver of total inequality. Urban-rural differences contribute surprisingly little to overall income inequality. Nevertheless, rural development and providing a conducive environment for more business and employment opportunities outside urban areas remain an important policy lever, not just

in poverty eradication, but also in reducing income inequality within the society. However, the poor and low-income households in urban areas may better be supported by employment security and social protection policies.

**Table 16** provides income shares by major groups that complement this decomposition analysis. Urban areas demonstrate significantly higher average per capita incomes than rural areas, as evidenced. Filipinos in urban areas earn 64.8% of total income but represent only 54.3% of the total population in 2023. In contrast, rural areas show Filipinos from rural communities earning 35.2% of total income in the country, while making up 45.7% of the population in 2023. The urban-rural income gap remains substantial and is widening over time, with urban income share growing to 64.8% in 2023, from 62.9% in 2018. Urban income concentration is also increasing, with urban income share rising faster than the increase in population share. The apparent gender parity in per capita income distribution masks significant intra-household resource allocation disparities that interview subjects consistently highlight. As noted by a corporate leader, women often face expectations to prioritize family responsibilities over career advancement even when holding senior positions, suggesting that household income equality does not translate to individual economic empowerment.

**Table 16. Income shares against population shares**

Group	Income Share			Population Share		
	2018	2021	2023	2018	2021	2023
<i>Location:</i>						
Urban	0.629	0.621	0.648	0.513	0.516	0.543
Rural	0.371	0.379	0.352	0.487	0.484	0.457
<i>Household head sex:</i>						
Male	0.740	0.726	0.705	0.792	0.772	0.752
Female	0.260	0.274	0.295	0.208	0.228	0.248
<i>Household head, education:</i>						
No grade completed	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.020	0.016	0.016
Elementary undergraduate	0.099	0.099	0.092	0.177	0.172	0.160
Elementary graduate	0.122	0.111	0.106	0.174	0.158	0.149
High school undergraduate	0.085	0.088	0.164	0.118	0.121	0.194
High school graduate	0.272	0.270	0.283	0.284	0.288	0.285
Post-secondary graduate	0.071	0.048	0.030	0.053	0.038	0.023
College undergraduate	0.090	0.096	0.080	0.068	0.077	0.063
College graduate	0.230	0.258	0.230	0.100	0.123	0.108
Post-graduate	0.022	0.022	0.007	0.006	0.006	0.002

Source: Authors' calculations from FIES-LFS 2018, 2021 and 2023.

**Table 16** illustrates the pattern of income gaps observed between male-headed households and female-headed households (though income here is per capita and not actual incomes of the individuals). Three-quarters of the population belongs in a household headed by a male. It can be observed that while a quarter of the population belongs in a female-headed household, this segment have higher income share, at around thirty percent (29.5%), which is bigger than its population share in 2023. Within-group accounts for 98.3% of the total national inequality, with negligible between-group inequality as shown by the 1.7% to 1.9% between-group contribution in 2023. While this may potentially suggest minimal gender income disparities, this apparent parity may obscure significant data limitations inherent in national household surveys that inadequately capture the complexity and nuance of inequality of gender incomes.

The FIES and LFS surveys collect total household income, and per capita incomes are assumed equally divided among the household members. Income attributed to each member is not accounted for, as well as the actual resource sharing within the household. This measurement limitation may mask the gaps in gender incomes and spending that exist within households, making the actual progress on gender equality difficult to characterize. Specific limitations include unpaid care work, informal sector participation, and intra-household resource allocation.

Household head education groups show the most interesting patterns in inequality when examining both Tables 14 and 15. Table 15 reveals that households headed by an individual with no grade completed, elementary undergraduates and graduates and high school undergraduates and graduates face significant and persistent educational income penalties, as they are earning below their population shares. The highest income premiums, those that are earning above their population shares, are the households headed by college graduates (nearly 2:1 ratio) and post-graduates (nearly 4:1 ratio) as shown in Table 26. Households headed by college graduates' share of total income remains stable at 23.0% in 2023. Among the highly educated, such as college undergraduates, graduates and post-graduates, significant income variation is observed in comparison to other groups. Elementary graduates, high school graduates and post-secondary graduates exhibit narrower income gaps with lower Gini coefficients. The decomposition analysis in Table 15 shows that while within-group inequality still dominates (70.6% to 73.0% in 2023), between-group inequality is more substantial (27.0% to 29.4% in 2023) for household head's education groups compared to location and sex, suggesting that education does indeed create meaningful income differences between groups, but remains a minor factor of total inequality. While education creates income differences between groups, most inequality still occurs within the same education levels. Households headed by highly educated individuals actually show more internal inequality, possibly reflecting greater returns to specialized skills, networks, or other unobserved factors within these groups. In addition, gender and disability differences may exacerbate these within-group gaps: for instance, as mentioned by a female executive interviewed for this study, a highly educated woman may forego higher pay or promotion opportunities due to unpaid care responsibilities, while a person with disability may be overlooked for advancement despite having comparable educational attainment. Both tables together suggest that education is the primary driver of income inequality, with the returns to higher education substantial and growing.

### **Intersectional Analysis of Income Disparities**

Income disparities intersect with gender, disability status, and indigenous identity to create complex patterns of economic disadvantage. Women's lower labor force participation rates (52.9 percent in 2021 compared to 76.3 percent for men) contribute to gendered income disparities, while persons with disabilities face additional barriers to employment and income generation.

Indigenous peoples, estimated to comprise 10-20 percent of the Philippine population, experience disproportionate poverty rates and limited access to economic opportunities. The lack of comprehensive disaggregated data on indigenous communities hinders accurate assessment of their specific income patterns and needs.

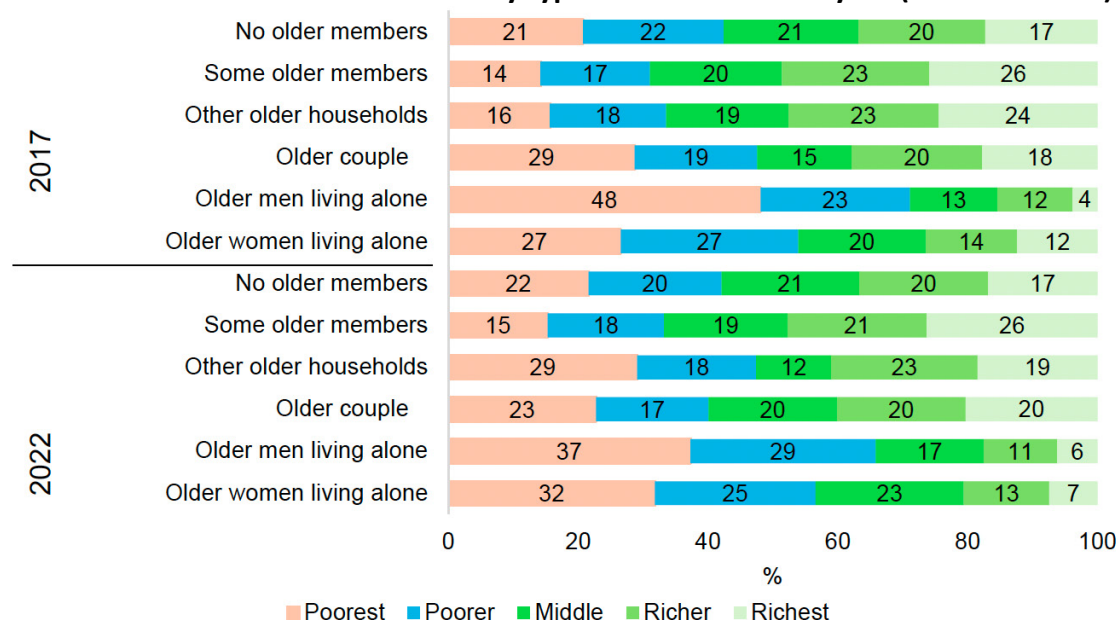
These intersecting disadvantages compound the effects of general income inequality, creating particularly acute vulnerabilities for individuals and households experiencing multiple forms

of marginalization. Understanding these layered inequality patterns becomes essential for designing targeted interventions that address both overall distributional challenges and the specific barriers faced by historically excluded populations.

Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data reveals how aging intersects with gender and socioeconomic status to create distinctive patterns of vulnerability among older persons. Elderly women face compounded disadvantages through longer lifespans, lower lifetime earnings, reduced access to formal pensions, and greater likelihood of informal caregiving responsibilities that limit their economic security in later life. These intersecting factors create what can be understood as multiplicative rather than additive disadvantages, where the combination of being elderly, female, and economically marginalized produces outcomes more severe than the sum of individual characteristics.

Asset poverty analysis reveals stark intersectional patterns when household composition and gender intersect with age-related vulnerabilities. **Figure 11**, sourced from NDHS data, demonstrates that in the Philippines, elderly persons living alone face severe asset disadvantage, with older women living alone showing 32% in the poorest wealth quintile in 2022, while older men living alone experience even higher asset poverty at 37% (Albert et al. 2025). This data reveals that among all household types examined, elderly individuals living alone consistently show the highest concentrations in the poorest wealth categories, indicating that social isolation intersects with economic marginalization to create particularly acute forms of disadvantage. The pattern demonstrates how living arrangements compound gender-based economic vulnerabilities, as elderly individuals without household economies of scale face both higher per-capita costs and reduced income-generating capacity.

**Figure 11. Wealth status of households by type of household and year (2017 and 2022)**



Source: NDHS 2017 and 2022

Cross-country evidence from Asia and the Pacific confirms that rural elderly women represent among the most asset-poor populations across the region. A comprehensive cross-country analysis of DHS data released by ADB shows that elderly women living alone have the lowest rate of agricultural land ownership at just 27.7%, compared to 41.6% for all elderly households (Albert et al. 2024). This regional pattern demonstrates extreme intersectional disadvantage,

with "In Afghanistan and Pakistan, not a single elderly woman living alone owns agricultural land" while even in more favorable contexts like Nepal and Timor-Leste, only 79.1% and 62.4% respectively of elderly women living alone own land. The ADB report identifies multiple intersecting barriers: "traditional gender roles have long dictated that men are the primary landowners... elderly women living alone are often widowed and may have relinquished property rights upon their husband's death, either voluntarily or because of societal or legal pressures" (Albert et al. 2025).

Gender disparities in asset ownership extend beyond land to encompass multiple forms of wealth accumulation that are essential for elderly economic security. Female elderly individuals living alone in 9 out of 14 Asian economies exhibit lower ownership proportions compared to their male counterparts across all communication assets, with gender gaps averaging 15.5 percentage points for radio, 14.1 percentage points for television, 20.8 percentage points for mobile phones, and 13.1 percentage points for landlines (Albert et al. 2024). These communication assets represent not merely convenience items but essential infrastructure for social connectedness, emergency access, and economic participation that become increasingly critical as physical mobility declines with age. The systematic exclusion of elderly women from asset ownership across agricultural land, communication technology, and other productive assets demonstrates how intersecting gender, age, and household composition disadvantages compound to create particularly severe forms of economic marginalization.

The life course accumulation of intersectional disadvantage becomes particularly evident when examining how earlier reproductive and employment patterns shape elderly poverty outcomes. Women who experienced early marriage, multiple pregnancies, and extended caregiving responsibilities face lifetime earnings deficits that manifest as elderly poverty decades later, creating a temporal dimension of intersectionality that demonstrates how disadvantages experienced in youth compound over time to create particular vulnerabilities in old age. Social protection system gaps further exacerbate these intersectional disadvantages, as formal social insurance systems designed around male employment patterns systematically exclude women who worked in informal sectors or interrupted careers for caregiving responsibilities. The ADB cross-country analysis emphasizes that "elderly women living alone face many barriers and bottlenecks to owning agricultural land (more than other elderly households)" while simultaneously being "more vulnerable to economic shocks, given higher personal spending needs and reliance on remittances and government pensions" (Albert et al. 2025).

## **5.2. SDG10.2: Promote Social, Economic and Political Inclusion**

### **Participation Rates Across Marginalized Groups**

Social, economic, and political inclusion of marginalized groups shows mixed progress, with the proportion of population living below 50 percent of median income decreasing from 17.6 percent in 2015 to 15.2 percent in 2023, approaching the target of 10.5 percent by 2030. This improvement indicates progress in reducing extreme relative poverty, though substantial work remains to achieve full inclusion.

Women's political participation in terms of voting is quite robust. A trend analysis of voter registration and turnout from 2004-2019 shows that more women register and vote than men (Jimenez 2022). In the 2025 mid-term elections, there were more female registered voters (34.8 million, 51.0%) than male (33.5 million, 49.0%) (ANFREL 2025). When it comes to political

leadership positions, women are still the minority, with women filling 23 percent of elected positions in 2022 and only 26 percent of ministerial positions according to recent assessments. When differentiated by national and local levels, women's representation decreases further, particularly in high-profile national positions. The reasons behind this are complex. However, one possible explanation could be that there are fewer women running for public office (David et al. 2017). Data from 2004 to 2019 show that more males seek public office than females at a ratio ranging from 5.7:1 in 2004 to 3.6:1 in 2019 (Jimenez 2022). In 2025, male certificate of candidacy (COC) filers continue to significantly outnumber their female counterparts. At least 33,652 individuals — or at least 78% — are male while 9,381 are female (COMELEC 2025).

### **Barriers to Political and Economic Engagement**

Multiple barriers continue to impede marginalized groups' full participation in political and economic life. For women, traditional gender roles and cultural expectations prioritizing domestic responsibilities limit opportunities for political engagement and career advancement. Women's political participation is constrained in electoral systems without gender quotas while increases in and sustained women's representation in parliaments are seen in electoral systems that do. (Ridley-Castle 2024)

Persons with disabilities face physical, institutional, and attitudinal barriers to political and economic participation. While the COMELEC through its Vulnerable Sectors Office has made efforts to ensure inclusive voting, persons with disability (0.71% in 2025) and those belonging to indigenous groups (0.01% in 2025) still make up a small proportion of registered voters relative to their share of the population (ANFREL 2025). Inaccessible infrastructure, discriminatory attitudes, and limited support services restrict their ability to engage fully in civic and economic life. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities identified significant shortcomings in the Philippines' approach to disability inclusion, including inadequate data collection and implementation gaps.

### **Institutional Mechanisms for Inclusion**

The Philippines has established various institutional mechanisms to promote inclusion, though their effectiveness varies significantly. The PCW serves as the primary coordinating body for gender equality initiatives, while the NCDA coordinates disability-related policies.

However, implementation challenges persist across all levels of government. The Gender and Development budget policy, requiring five percent allocation for gender programs, has become compliance-oriented rather than transformational. Similarly, disability-related institutions often lack sufficient resources and political support to effectively promote inclusion.

## **5.3. SDG10.3: Ensure Equal Opportunity and Reduce Discrimination**

### **Anti-Discrimination Law Enforcement**

The Philippines has comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, but enforcement mechanisms remain weak across multiple sectors. While legal frameworks exist to address discrimination based on gender, disability, and other characteristics, implementation gaps limit their effectiveness in ensuring equal opportunity.

The absence of systematic data collection on discrimination experiences hampers efforts to assess progress on SDG10.3. Indicator 10.3.1, measuring the proportion of population reporting discrimination experiences, lacks regular data collection in the Philippines, limiting the ability to track progress systematically.

### Workplace Equality Initiatives

Workplace equality initiatives show mixed results, with some sectors achieving progress while others lag behind. The Labor Force Survey data indicates persistent gender disparities in employment, with women's unemployment rates remaining higher than men's across most age groups. Female labor force participation has hovered in the 30s-low 40% in the past 15 years, although in the services sector, women make up about ~76% of employment in that sector. Data from the PSA'S 2025 Fact Sheet shows that the proportion of women in managerial positions was approximately 48.9% in 2016 and around 45.6% in 2023, indicating a slight decrease but generally close to parity in management roles over recent years (PSA 2025).

The proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in employment, education, or training shows concerning gender disparities, with young women twice as likely as young men to be in this category. This pattern reflects both limited educational opportunities and restricted economic prospects for young women.

### Educational Access and Completion Patterns

Educational access shows positive trends toward gender parity, with girls often outperforming boys in enrollment and completion rates across most education levels (Table 17). Elementary completion rates reached 92.8 percent in 2023, with females achieving 95.1 percent compared to males at 90.7 percent. Junior high school completion rates also favor females at 87.4 percent compared to 82.5 percent for males. Interviews, however, reveal challenges in translating educational achievement into economic opportunities. Skills development agency officials note that despite women's educational achievements over the past decades, barriers persist in accessing non-traditional trade training. Infrastructure requirements, industry acceptance, and perception challenges continue to limit women's participation in higher-value technical fields, even with targets for three percent annual increases in women's enrollment in non-traditional trades.

**Table 17. Educational completion rates by gender (2015-2023)**

Education Level	Total 2015 (%)	Total 2023 (%)	Female 2023 (%)	Male 2023 (%)	2030 Target (%)	Data Source
Elementary	84.0	92.8	95.1	90.7	99.0	EBEIS, DepEd
Junior High School	74.0	82.5	87.4	82.5	98.0	EBEIS, DepEd

Source: PSA SDG Watch

However, these educational advantages do not translate consistently into economic opportunities, suggesting that barriers to equal opportunity persist beyond the education system. The disconnect between educational achievement and economic outcomes highlights the need for comprehensive approaches addressing structural inequalities.

## 5.4. SDG10.4: Adopt Policies for Greater Equality

### Progressive Taxation and Social Protection

The Philippines has implemented various policies aimed at achieving greater equality, though their effectiveness in reducing inequality remains limited. The labor share of gross domestic product increased from 32.8 percent in 2015 to 35.5 percent in 2023, indicating some progress in ensuring workers receive fair shares of economic growth.

Social protection programs, particularly the 4Ps, have contributed to poverty reduction but face targeting challenges. Nearly 30 percent of beneficiaries come from outside of the three bottom wealth quintiles (Albert et al. 2024), while the program cap of 4.4 million households leaves many poor families without support.

### Labor Market Regulation Effectiveness

Labor market regulations show mixed effectiveness in promoting equality. While minimum wage policies exist, enforcement remains challenging, particularly in the informal sector where many women and marginalized workers are concentrated. Average daily basic pay for wage and salary workers increased from 377.7 pesos in 2015 to 583.2 pesos in 2023, though real purchasing power gains depend on inflation rates. Unemployment rates have decreased across most demographic groups, with overall rates falling from 6.3 percent in 2015 to 4.3 percent in 2023 (Table 18). However, gender disparities persist, with women experiencing higher unemployment rates despite lower labor force participation. Further youth unemployment has been much higher across age groups.

**Table 18. Employment and unemployment trends by sex (2015-2023)**

Indicator	Total 2015 (%)	Total 2023 (%)	Female 2023 (%)	Male 2023 (%)	2030 Target (%)	Data Source
Unemployment Rate (15+ years)	6.3	4.3	4.6	4.1	4.0-5.0	LFS, PSA
Unemployment Rate (15-24 years)	14.9	10.7	12.5	9.5	-	LFS, PSA
Unemployment Rate (25+ years)	4.3	3.3	3.5	3.2	-	LFS, PSA
Youth NEET (15-24 years)	18.6	12.0	15.2	9.0	12.7	LFS, PSA

Source: PSA SDG Watch

Table 18 and subsequent tables on the labor market must however be interpreted alongside the qualitative insights on care work distribution and workplace dynamics.

### Fiscal Policy Impact on Inequality

Fiscal policy effectiveness in reducing inequality requires enhanced measurement and monitoring. While the Philippines has established various redistribution mechanisms through taxation and social spending, comprehensive analysis of their combined impact on inequality remains limited.

The government's commitment to reducing poverty incidence from 18 percent to 9 percent by 2028 requires substantial improvements in fiscal policy design and implementation. Current social assistance benefit levels remain too low to achieve these ambitious targets without significant policy reforms.

## **6. Cross-Cutting SDG Analysis on GEDSI**

This section firstly provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding inequality patterns in the Philippines through Shapley decomposition analysis of merged FIES-LFS data. This decomposition quantifies the relative contributions of different factors to overall inequality, providing the empirical foundation for examining progress across multiple SDGs and avoiding piecemeal analysis of interconnected challenges. Wages or income better reflect differences in economic welfare, whereas working hours better capture access to economic opportunities; accordingly, we retain total hours worked as the primary outcome and add a robustness Shapley using (log) hourly wages among wage/salary workers to analyze welfare differences in parallel. This paired specification enables a side-by-side comparison of how gender, household income sources, and geography contribute to inequality in working hours (opportunity) versus wages (welfare).

Also in this section, we conduct an examination of how educational attainment disparities manifests across different vulnerable persons. We also conduct full employment and decent work analysis covering labor force participation rates, occupational segregation, and wage gaps across gender, disability status, and ethnicity, complemented by key informant interviews with employers, workers' organizations, and persons with disabilities regarding workplace barriers and accommodations.

An analysis of accessible transportation systems connects the geographic inequality contribution to transportation accessibility challenges that perpetuate spatial disadvantage. The analysis combines infrastructure accessibility data with community-based qualitative research documenting how transportation barriers affect access to employment, education, and health services for persons with disabilities and rural women.

Further, we describe broader patterns of political and economic exclusion from decision-making processes. This includes integration of representation data with in-depth interviews with women leaders, Indigenous community representatives, and disability rights advocates about barriers to meaningful participation in governance structures.

This approach demonstrates how inequality factors identified in the Shapley decomposition manifest differently across sectors while revealing the interconnected nature of GEDSI challenges that require coordinated policy responses.

### **6.1. Contribution of Various Factors to Inequality: Shapley Decomposition**

Beyond descriptive measures of inequality, this study tests whether gender inequality is a more important factor than wealth inequality in explaining gender-specific outcomes. The observable data on individual outcomes available in the merged FIES-LFS include the total hours worked of an individual, as well as their highest educational attainment. Wages or income better reflect differences in economic welfare, whereas working hours better capture access to economic opportunities; accordingly, we retain total hours worked as the primary

outcome and add a robustness Shapley using (log) hourly wages among wage/salary workers to analyze welfare differences in parallel. A Shapley decomposition is conducted to assess the contributions of various subsets of variables to the variance in the outcome variable, which is the total hours worked during the past week. This decomposition analysis examines to what extent gender inequality contributes to inequality in working hours, in comparison to wealth inequality, as well as locational or regional variations.

Equation 1 shows the linear model to estimate the various factors that influence an individual's total hours worked. Explanatory variables include gender differences, household wealth, location and region. A dummy variable for male captures the gender differences. The natural logarithms of household salaries from regular employment, income from wholesale and retail, and entrepreneurial activities serve as measures of household wealth, as land and assets are not directly measured in the household survey. A dummy variable for urban captures locational effect, while a dummy variable for the National Capital Region is incorporated in the model to elucidate the importance of regional effects, particularly of residing in the capital, where there are more employment opportunities. An error term is finally added to capture other unobserved factors and others that cannot be measured in the survey.

$$Total\ hours\ worked = a + b(sex) + c(household\ wealth) + d(urban) + e(region) + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

**Table 19** presents results of an ordinary least squares regression identifying determinants of total hours worked per week across the survey years 2018, 2021 and 2023. The regression analysis results confirms that males worked significantly more hours than females across all years. The gender gap narrowed from 2.6 hours in 2018 to 1.9 hours in 2021, then widened again to 2.4 in 2023. Higher education consistently increases hours worked at around a fifth to a third of an hour per additional level. The effect of education is strongest during the pandemic in 2021, at 0.3 additional hours per education level. The age squared coefficient is negative, indicating an inverted U-shape relationship, suggesting that working hours peak in middle age, then decline afterwards. Married individuals work around 1.6 to 2.3 hours more (than other persons) per week. The results demonstrate that married mothers with infants and toddlers (age 0-2 years old) work fewer hours, 2.9 to 3.8 hours lesser on average, likely due to childcare responsibilities. Interpreted as an opportunity margin, these patterns indicate who is able to access and supply labor time; the wage-based robustness check will clarify whether the same drivers also shape earnings inequality.

**Table 19. Ordinary least squares regression: Total number of hours worked during the past week**

Explanatory variables	(1) 2018	(2) 2021	(3) 2023
Male	2.559*** (0.005)	1.855*** (0.005)	2.367*** (0.005)
Highest educational attainment	0.176*** (0.001)	0.328*** (0.001)	0.192*** (0.001)
Age squared	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)
Married	1.635*** (0.006)	2.258*** (0.006)	1.873*** (0.005)
Married mother with child (0-2 years old)	-3.841***	-3.046***	-2.898***

	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.017)
Household salaries from regular employment (ln)	0.203***	0.220***	0.259***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)
Household income from Wholesale and Retail (ln)	0.368***		0.379***
	(0.001)		(0.001)
Household income from entrepreneurial activities (ln)	-0.244***	-0.066***	-0.298***
	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Urban	3.301***	3.668***	3.079***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Household is residing in National Capital Region	1.592***	1.857***	1.938***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)
Household is poor	-3.323***	-3.591***	-3.449***
	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Constant	37.526***	34.414***	35.253***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)
Observations	38,038,175	41,016,326	42,052,625
R-squared	0.070	0.062	0.079

Source: Authors' calculations based on FIES-LFS 2018, 2021 and 2023, PSA.

Table 19 further reveals that regular employment salary increases work hours, as well as wholesale or retail incomes, while entrepreneurial incomes reduce employed hours worked, suggesting possible substitution between employment and self-employment. Urban residents work more hours, especially during the pandemic: 3.7 hours more in 2021, and 3.1 hours more in 2023. National Capital Region residents are working an additional 1.7 hours to 1.9 hours more than their rural counterparts. This suggests that urban labor markets demand longer work hours. Workers belonging in households classified as poor have fewer work hours, lesser by 3.3 to 3.6 hours.

The 2021 results, reflecting the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic show interesting patterns, particularly a smaller gender gap and stronger education effects, suggesting the pandemic may have temporarily altered traditional work patterns. The R-squared values presented in Table 19 are low, indicating that these variables explain only around 6.2% to 7.9% of variation in work hours. Other unobserved factors, such as job type, sector, and individual preferences and circumstances such as disability, are potential important determinants that may influence work hours, but were left out of the model due to data limitations.

**Table 20** provides a Shapley decomposition analysis that quantifies how much each factor contributes to overall inequality in total working hours. The Shapley method provides a measure to attribute the explained variance from the earlier regression among all the explanatory variables. Geographic factors predominantly explain inequality of working hours across all three years. Urban location is the single largest contributor across all years: 29.6% in 2018, 36.0% in 2021, to 25.1% in 2023. National Capital Region adds another 10.4% to 12.9%. Together, geographic factors explain around 40.0% of total inequality in 2018, with the most pronounced during the pandemic in 2021 at 48.9%, but this has since decreased in importance to 35.8% in 2023. Table 20 also shows that household income sources, such as salary from regular employment, incomes from wholesale and retail, and entrepreneurial activities, are also major contributors to work hours inequality. The combined income sources explain 38.1% of total inequality in 2023, and this has increased from 30.7% in 2018.

**Table 20. Shapley decomposition: Contributions of various factors to inequality**

Independent variable:	2018		2021		2023	
	Shapley value	Percent	Shapley value	Percent	Shapley value	Percent
<b>Total no. of working hours (past week)</b>						
Factor						
Male	0.006	8.3%	0.003	4.9%	0.005	6.4%
Highest educational attainment	0.003	4.6%	0.006	9.4%	0.004	5.5%
Age squared	0.003	4.7%	0.002	3.9%	0.001	0.9%
Married	0.002	2.2%	0.002	3.5%	0.003	3.7%
Married mother with child (0-2 years old)	0.001	1.8%	0.000	0.7%	0.001	0.7%
Hh salaries: regular employment	0.008	11.0%	0.008	13.6%	0.013	16.2%
Hh income: wholesale and retail	0.009	12.3%			0.009	10.9%
Hh income: entrepreneurial	0.005	7.4%	0.003	5.2%	0.009	11.1%
Urban	0.021	29.6%	0.022	36.0%	0.020	25.1%
National Capital Region	0.007	10.4%	0.008	12.9%	0.008	10.7%
Household is poor	0.007	9.4%	0.008	13.5%	0.008	9.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.070</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0.062</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0.079</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Authors' calculations from FIES-LFS 2018, 2021 and 2023.

Demographic factors contribute relatively little to work hours inequality. Gender differences are notable but not dominant: at 6.4% in 2023, 4.9% in 2021 and 8.3% in 2018. Education contributes 5.5% in 2023, while it posted a higher result at 9.4% during the pandemic in 2021. Age, marriage and having younger children contribute to a combined total of 5.3% in total inequality in 2023.

The temporal patterns evident in Table 20 show that the pandemic year in 2021 showed unique patterns, such as urban location having its highest contribution at 36.0%, with gender difference at its lowest at 4.9%, with overall inequality at the lowest, indicated by the Shapley total value at 0.062. Recovery in 2023 was characterized by geographic factors remaining dominant but slightly decreased, while household income sources increased in importance, and overall inequality increased, with Shapley total value at 0.079. This analysis suggests that where one lives and their household income portfolio are the primary drivers of differences in work hours, more than demographic characteristics.

## 6.2. SDG4.5: Education Inclusion and Equity

### Inclusive Education Implementation Progress

The Philippines has made some progress in promoting inclusive education, though significant challenges remain in ensuring equitable access and quality for learners with disabilities. While overall educational participation rates show gender parity or female advantage across most levels, disaggregated data for students with disabilities reveals persistent gaps in access and completion.

The transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted significant barriers for students with disabilities, including limited access to assistive technologies, unreliable internet connectivity, and absence of inclusive learning materials. These technical

and structural obstacles deepened existing inequalities and left many students with disabilities further marginalized.

### **Learning Outcome Disparities**

Limited data exists on learning outcome disparities for students with disabilities, though available evidence suggests substantial gaps in achievement levels. The National Achievement Test and other assessment mechanisms typically do not provide comprehensive disaggregated data by disability status, hampering efforts to track progress in educational inclusion.

The cost of education for children with disabilities presents additional barriers to inclusion. A UNICEF study found that health packages and subsidies provided by PhilHealth were inadequate to cover the needs of children with disabilities, while families faced substantial additional costs for specialized services and support.

In a still-to-be-published report on the Philippines' performance in the South East Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2024, Grade 5 girls scored better than boys in reading and mathematics. However, the disparities decrease for those with higher socio-economic status.

### **Teacher Training and Curriculum Adaptation**

Gaps remain in implementing inclusive education policies, particularly regarding teacher capacity to serve diverse learners and accessibility of learning environments. Teacher training programs have not systematically integrated disability inclusion competencies, while curriculum adaptations remain limited across most subject areas. While the DepEd has initiated some inclusive education programs, but systematic implementation across all schools requires substantial additional investment in training, infrastructure, and support services. Many schools lack physical accessibility and specialized equipment necessary to serve students with different types of disabilities effectively.

## **6.3. SDG8.5: Full Employment and Decent Work**

### **GEDSI Dimensions of Employment, Time Use and Care Economy**

Labor market outcomes serve as critical indicators of gender equality and social inclusion progress, revealing complex intersections between economic participation, social norms, and structural barriers. Time allocation decisions between market and non-market participation significantly affect individuals' prospects for human capital development and labor market advancement, with these choices often dictated by social norms that assign specialized roles to different groups. While gender represents a primary dimension of analysis, it intersects with disability status, poverty levels, geographical location, and ethnic identity to create complex patterns of inclusion and exclusion in Philippine labor markets.

Time allocation patterns reveal fundamental intersections between gender roles and economic participation that extend beyond traditional binary classifications. In the Philippines, analysis of time use data demonstrates that women spend significantly more hours on unpaid care and domestic work compared to men, with these disparities affecting labor market participation patterns across multiple dimensions of identity.

In 2023, evidence at the global stage indicated that the average time spent by adults on unpaid care and domestic work was estimated at 2.9 hours per day, accounting for approximately 12% of the day (Hanna et al. 2023). However, this burden was not distributed equally between women and men, with women spending nearly three times as many hours as men (Hanna et al. 2023). This global pattern was also observed in the Philippines.

Early recognition of unpaid care work's economic significance led the then National Statistical Coordination Board (now consolidated within the PSA) to conduct a study showing that such work contributes up to 37 percent of GDP, prompting the design of a pilot time-use survey in 1999-2000 (ILO and UNDP 2018). However, this pilot revealed significant methodological and cost challenges, with the survey being deemed lengthy, tedious, and prohibitively expensive at an estimated cost of 1.1 billion pesos for national implementation.

Multiple data sources provide evidence of substantial gender disparities in care work. Examination of the 2000 time-use survey by Abrigo and Francisco-Abrigo (2019) showed that women in their mid-thirties spending an average of 24 hours per week on housework alone compared to just 8 hours for men. Results using the 2012 International Social Survey Programme indicated that women spent 27 and 31 hours/week on housework and care work, respectively. These were 12 and 13 hours/week higher than the time men spent on these tasks. These differences were statistically significant (**Table 21**). In the 2022 survey, women spent an average of 23 hours per week on housework and care work. Respectively, these were 10 and 9 hours/week higher than the time men spent on these tasks. The differences were statistically significant as well. In terms of market work, men spent around 5 hours/week more than women in 2012, although no significant difference was detected in 2022.

**Table 21. Difference in the time allocated to market and non-market work (hours/week), by various attributes: 2012 and 2022**

	Male vs female	Poor vs non-poor	Without toddler/s vs with toddler/s	Less than college vs at least college	Non-minor ethnicity vs minor ethnicity	Suburbs vs city
<b>2012</b>						
Housework	-11.82*** (0.75)	0.56 (0.82)	0.32 (0.79)	-0.76 (0.98)	-0.87 (1.32)	-2.40** (0.85)
Care work	-12.58*** (1.07)	1.81 (1.15)	-7.79*** (1.09)	-2.81* (1.36)	1.85 (1.84)	-1.29 (1.19)
Market work	4.59*** (1.35)	0.47 (1.32)	-4.32*** (1.27)	-1.4 (1.54)	0.77 (2.19)	-6.09*** (1.35)
<b>2022</b>						
Housework	-9.91*** (0.55)	0.51 (0.60)	-0.50 (0.60)	-0.67 (0.69)	-0.31 (1.10)	1.49* (0.62)
Care work	-9.18*** (0.83)	0.79 (0.87)	-7.30*** (0.84)	-2.69** (1.01)	-4.31** (1.56)	-1.39 (0.92)
Market work	1.50 (1.19)	-1.09 (1.16)	-2.83* (1.17)	-2.13 (1.31)	-4.15* (2.04)	-4.02** (1.23)

Source: Authors' computation based on the 2012 and 2022 International Social Survey Programme Survey  
Notes: Null hypothesis: diff = mean(male) - mean(female)=0, diff = mean(poor) - mean(non-poor)=0 etc.

\*/\*\*/\*\* significant at the 10/5/1% level. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

Poor constitutes the first and second quintiles of the household income data. Minority includes ethnicities that do not belong to the top 10 (Tagalog, Bisaya/Binisaya, Ilocano, Cebuano, Ilonggo, Bikol/Bicol, Waray, Kapampangan, Maguindanao, Pangasinan) based on the tabulation by the Philippine Statistics Authority using

While the poor and non-poor did not significantly differ in market and non-market hours, individuals with children aged less than 6 years old spent more time on care work and market work than those without (by around 8 and 7 hours/week in 2012 and 2022, respectively). Interestingly, in 2022, the care work hours of individuals with at least college-level education were approximately 3 hours/week higher than those without, reflecting the more active involvement of more educated individuals in their children's development. Those who belong to ethnic minorities spent around 4 hours/week more on care work and market work. Meanwhile, city dwellers spent 4 hours/week more on market work than those residing in suburban areas.

The gender dichotomy in market and non-market work was evident even when the intersection of gender with other attributes, including educational attainment, welfare status, ethnicity, presence of toddler/s, and geographical location, was considered (**Table 22**). Regardless of intersectionalities, t-test results showed that women spent more time on non-market work while men spent more time on market work. However, the gender disparity in care work hours somewhat narrowed from 2012 to 2022. Moreover, there was no significant gender difference in the time spent on market work in 2022.

**Table 22. Difference in the time allocated to market and non-market work, by sex and another attribute**

	Male vs female and:									
	Respondent's educational attainment		Welfare status		Ethnicity		Presence of toddler/s		Location	
	Less than college	At least college	Poor	Non-poor	Non-minor ethnicity	Minor ethnicity	Without toddler/s	With toddler/s	Suburb	City
<b>2012</b>										
Housework	-11.82*** (0.83)	-11.82*** -1.7	-12.35*** (0.94)	-10.98*** -1.24	-11.74*** (0.80)	-12.59*** -2.03	-10.33*** (1.04)	-13.36*** -1.07	-11.19*** (0.85)	-13.16*** -1.49
Care work	-12.63*** (1.17)	-12.36*** -2.53	-13.97*** (1.38)	-10.28*** -1.68	-12.33*** (1.15)	-14.81*** -2.72	-7.25*** (1.40)	-17.27*** -1.55	-12.12*** (1.27)	-13.57*** -1.98
Market work	4.17** (1.56)	6.30* -2.63	4.45* (1.77)	4.80* -2.06	4.71** (1.44)	3.54 -3.7	4.20* (1.80)	4.03* -2.04	6.15*** (1.66)	2.92 -2.24
<b>2022</b>										
Housework	-9.86*** (0.63)	-10.05*** -1.18	-9.52*** (0.72)	-10.15*** -0.87	-9.87*** (0.57)	-10.61*** -2.15	-9.53*** (0.70)	-10.49*** -0.9	-10.25*** (0.68)	-9.20*** -0.95
Care work	-8.97*** (0.91)	-9.86*** -1.91	-7.47*** (1.15)	-11.32*** -1.22	-8.94*** (0.86)	-12.62*** -3.26	-5.45*** (1.01)	-13.11*** -1.27	-8.90*** (0.97)	-9.83*** -1.59
Market work	1.75 (1.39)	1.32 -2.29	2.42 (1.58)	0.24 -1.82	1.93 (1.24)	-1.87 -4.03	0.07 (1.51)	3.31 -1.91	0.09 (1.41)	4.64* -2.14

Source: Authors' computation based on the 2012 and 2022 International Social Survey Programme Survey  
 Notes: Null hypothesis:  $\text{diff} = \text{mean}(\text{male, less than college}) - \text{mean}(\text{female, less than college}) = 0$ ,  $\text{diff} = \text{mean}(\text{male, at least college}) - \text{mean}(\text{female, at least college}) = 0$ , etc.

\*/\*\*/\*\*\* significant at the 10/5/1% level. Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

Poor constitutes the first and second quintiles of the household income data. Minority includes ethnicities that do not belong to the top 10 (Tagalog, Bisaya/Binisaya, Ilocano, Cebuano, Ilonggo, Bikol/Bicol, Waray, Kapampangan, Maguindanao, Pangasinan) based on the tabulation by the Philippine Statistics Authority using

the 2025 Census of Population and Housing, downloaded from <https://psa.gov.ph/content/ethnicity-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing> on June 2, 2025.

Data in Tables 21 and 22 on time allocation for market and non-market work aligns with stakeholder observations about persistent care work burdens.

### Age Demographics and Labor Force Implications

Another concern related to the care economy was the care work burden among the sandwich generation, which comprised persons who care for both their children and aging parents (Miller 1981). While this may not yet be a pressing concern in the Philippines, it may become so in the near future given that the country is aging. Assigning the 30-44 years old as the relevant age interval for the sandwich generation and using the 2020 Census of Population and Housing indicated that only in around 3.7% households can the simultaneous presence of children (0-17 years old) and the elderly (60 years old or older) be observed. The country remains young, although projections indicated an increasing share of the older population (**Table 23**). The double-digit share of the elderly can be observed to coincide with the still high, although decreasing, share of the 0-17 age group. The sandwich generation is expected to begin around 2040, when the proportion of 0-17-year-olds will be twice that of the elderly population.

**Table 23. Projected share (in %) of various age groups to the total population: 2020-2055**

	Projection year							
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2055
0-17	40.3	36.9	33.9	31.5	29.7	29.7	28.8	27.7
30-44	20.1	21.3	22.3	22.8	23.1	23.0	22.6	20.3
60 above	8.5	9.6	11.0	12.2	13.6	15.0	16.7	18.7

Source: Authors' computation based on the Philippine Statistics Authority's projected population using scenario 1. Downloaded from <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/census/projected-population> on July 22, 2025.

### Care Infrastructure Development

The Philippines has made limited progress in developing comprehensive care infrastructure to support unpaid care work recognition and redistribution. While some initiatives exist, systematic investment in care services remains insufficient to significantly alter gendered time allocation patterns or enable women's full economic participation.

The burden of unpaid care work serves as a primary factor limiting women's economic participation, with gendered social norms assigning women primary responsibility for childcare and household management. The NHCS data shows some positive trends during the COVID-19 pandemic, with men's participation in care work increasing notably from 5.4 hours to 8 hours per day between 2017 and 2021, while women's care hours remained relatively stable at around 12-13 hours per day (Rost and Koissy-Kpein 2018). This pattern intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, when women faced increased unpaid care burdens due to school closures and heightened health precautions, though the pandemic also created opportunities for greater male participation in household work as employment patterns shifted. Additionally, the government target of 85% of children from age zero (0) to four (4) enrolled in Child Development Centers in 2024 was not achieved, with the actual enrollment rate at 28% (DBM NEP 2026).

The data consistently shows that households with children under six years old spend significantly more time on care work, with this burden disproportionately affecting women. These findings underscore the ongoing need for an official national time-use survey to continue the work initially piloted in 2000, as current data collection through the LFS (that started in April 2019) captures only limited aspects of unpaid care work activities.

The participation of men and women was affected by non-market work. However, the women's probability of working was substantially lower than that of men, and this was observed across varying hours spent on care work and housework. The difference in the hours spent by men and women was significant, particularly in care work hours. This was largely due to the decline in women's probabilities of working as the time spent on care work intensified (**Table 24**).

**Table 24. Estimated probability of working, by sex and time spent on housework and care work**

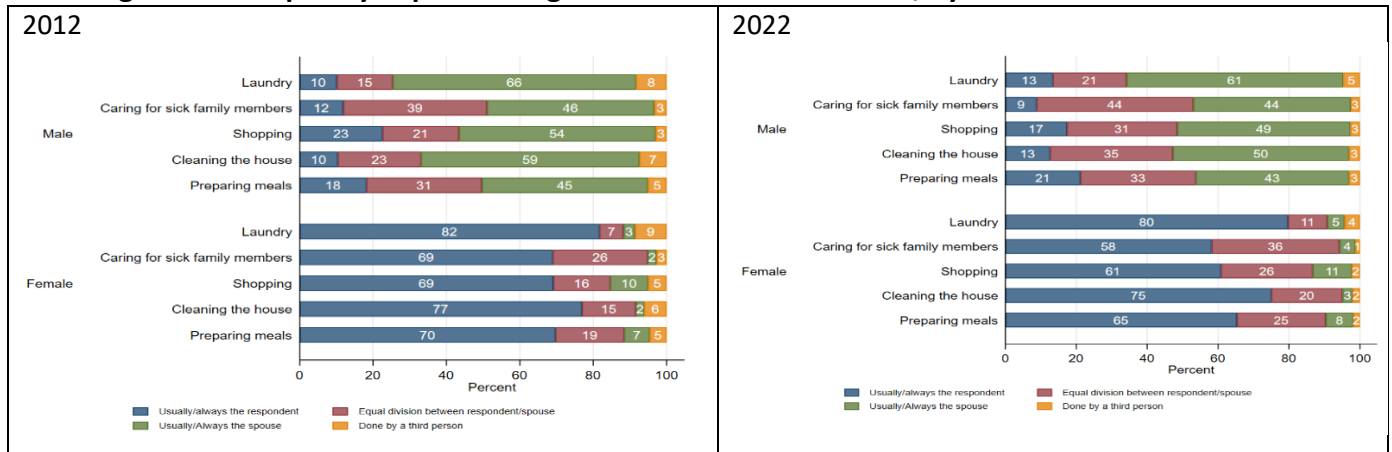
Hours/week	Male		Female	
	Care work	Housework	Care work	Housework
5	0.70*** (0.02)	0.73*** (0.02)	0.45*** (0.02)	0.46*** (0.02)
10	0.70*** (0.02)	0.72*** (0.01)	0.45*** (0.02)	0.45*** (0.02)
15	0.71*** (0.02)	0.71*** (0.01)	0.44*** (0.02)	0.45*** (0.02)
20	0.72*** (0.02)	0.70*** (0.02)	0.43*** (0.02)	0.44*** (0.01)
25	0.72*** (0.02)	0.70*** (0.02)	0.43*** (0.02)	0.43*** (0.02)
30	0.73*** (0.03)	0.69*** (0.03)	0.42*** (0.02)	0.43*** (0.02)
35	0.74*** (0.03)	0.68*** (0.03)	0.41*** (0.02)	0.42*** (0.02)
40	0.74*** (0.03)	0.68*** (0.04)	0.41*** (0.03)	0.42*** (0.02)
45	0.75*** (0.04)	0.67*** (0.05)	0.40*** (0.03)	0.41*** (0.03)
50	0.75*** (0.04)	0.66*** (0.05)	0.39*** (0.03)	0.41*** (0.03)

Source: Authors' computation based on the 2022 International Social Survey Programme Survey

Notes: The numbers are predictions generated after *probit* in Stata.

Time allocation and care work patterns are further influenced by demographic trends (**Figure 12**). Broken down by housework tasks, female respondents reported they usually/always perform household chores like washing clothes, shopping, cleaning the house, preparing meals, and caring for sick family members. Between 70-82% of female respondents usually/always perform household chores, compared to only 10-23% of male respondents, a pattern that corporate leaders note affects career advancement opportunities.

**Figure 12. Frequency in performing housework and care work, by sex**



Source: Authors' computation based on the 2012 and 2022 International Social Survey Programme

Housework and care work can also adversely affect labor market participation. Based on the data for prime-aged individuals (25 to 59 years old) not seeking work, a large percentage of both men and women cited housework as a reason. Several observations stand out. First, a large percentage of both single and married females were not seeking market work due to household responsibilities. The proportion of married women citing household and family duties as their reason for not seeking work remained consistently high, at 94% or more, from 2006 to 2020. This declined to approximately 92% in 2020 and further dropped to 83% in 2021 due to an increase in temporary illnesses and concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, past trends are re-emerging, with more married women prioritizing household and family responsibilities, as evidenced by the increase from 89.6% in 2022 to 90.4% in 2023.

Second, the percentage of both single and married males not looking for work due to household responsibilities was lower compared to that of their female counterparts. The share of married and single men citing housework as their reason for not looking for work ranged from 30-36% and 16-32%, respectively, from 2010 to 2019. During the early years of the pandemic, the proportion of married men citing housework as a reason for not seeking work declined to 13%. Their share gradually increased from 16% in 2021 to 27% in 2023. Similarly, single men citing housework as a reason declined from 13% in 2020 to 11% in 2021 but rebounded to the 18-20% range in 2022 and 2023.

The relationship between unpaid care work and labor force participation becomes clearer when examining **Figure 13** alongside Table 24. As shown in Figure 12, the proportion of married women citing household and family duties as their reason for not seeking work remained consistently high at 94% or more from 2006 to 2020, declining only temporarily during COVID-19 before returning to 90.4% in 2023. Table 24 reinforces this pattern, showing that women's probability of working decreases substantially as care work hours increase, while men's probability remains relatively stable regardless of care work involvement.

**Figure 13. Reasons why individuals were not looking for work**



Source: Authors' tabulation based on the July round of the Labor Force Survey

Notes: The data include information from individuals who are: 1) either the household head or spouse, and 2) aged 24 to 59 years.

### Regional Labor Market Participation Patterns

Labor market indicators serve as critical lenses through which to examine the depth and persistence of gender inequality across Philippine regions. While the Philippines has gained international recognition for its achievements in gender parity—consistently ranking among the top performers globally in the WEF's Global Gender Gap Report—significant regional variations reveal complex patterns of gender inequality that intersect with geography, economic structure, and cultural contexts.

The persistent gender gaps in labor market indicators reflect broader structural inequalities that extend far beyond employment outcomes. These disparities illuminate how women's economic empowerment remains constrained by intersecting barriers including unpaid care work

burdens, limited access to formal sector opportunities, educational mismatches, and deeply embedded cultural norms about women's roles in society.

The regional heterogeneity in gender outcomes also reveals how local contexts shape women's economic opportunities differently across the country. Urban regions like the National Capital Region (NCR) demonstrate relatively smaller gender gaps, suggesting that infrastructure, formal sector employment, and service-oriented economies can facilitate greater gender parity. Conversely, regions with predominantly agricultural economies or those affected by conflict and displacement show more pronounced gender disparities, highlighting how economic structure and stability influence gender equality outcomes.

Labor force participation rates reveal some of the most striking manifestations of gender inequality across Philippine regions (**Table 25**). The national gender gap of approximately 20-25 percentage points between male and female participation represents one of the most consistent patterns of inequality in the labor market data. However, this aggregate figure masks significant regional variations that provide insights into the diverse factors constraining women's economic participation across different areas of the country.

**Table 25. Labor force participation rate by region and sex (2019-2023)**

Region	2019			2021			2023		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>60.2</b>	<b>70.9</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>73.1</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>62.4</b>
National Capital Region (NCR)	70.3	50.2	60.2	69.5	49.5	59.4	72.5	55.9	64.1
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	72.7	53.1	63.1	73.9	54.7	64.6	75.3	56.9	66.3
Region I	74.3	47.8	61.0	72.7	47.5	60.1	73.4	48.3	60.6
Region II	77.6	47.3	62.7	74.7	51.0	63.4	74.7	51.1	63.2
Region III	71.0	46.5	58.9	69.3	46.7	58.3	72.5	49.6	61.2
CALABARZON	68.5	52.4	60.4	69.4	50.7	60.0	69.9	53.5	61.6
MIMAROPA	73.0	48.5	61.2	71.6	52.7	62.4	82.1	49.5	65.6
Region V	70.8	47.2	59.1	68.2	44.7	56.9	67.6	43.1	55.7
Region VI	71.2	50.2	60.9	72.8	54.2	63.7	72.9	53.3	63.2
Region VII	70.7	52.4	61.7	67.7	49.5	58.7	71.8	53.4	62.4
Region VIII	72.1	49.1	60.9	69.1	45.7	57.8	72.4	47.4	60.2
Region IX	72.7	40.3	56.5	72.9	47.1	60.1	73.2	44.6	59.1
Region X	72.8	47.9	60.5	73.9	52.1	63.2	74.2	50.7	62.8
Region XI	76.1	45.9	61.6	73.7	46.2	60.6	76.7	49.3	63.4
Region XII	78.0	46.9	63.1	74.4	49.6	62.4	77.1	54.5	66.1
CARAGA	71.7	48.3	60.3	71.6	49.6	60.9	76.8	54.3	66.2
Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)	71.4	26.6	48.8	73.4	33.8	53.5	75.7	54.2	65.3

Source: Labor Force Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) presents perhaps the most dramatic example of changing gender dynamics in labor force participation. Female participation in this region increased from an exceptionally low 26.6% in 2019 to 54.2% in

2023, representing a remarkable transformation that suggests economic empowerment following peace processes and development investments. This transformation demonstrates how political stability and targeted development efforts can rapidly alter gender inequality patterns, though the region still faces significant challenges in other dimensions of gender parity.

Regions like the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) and Western Visayas show relatively higher female labor force participation rates, suggesting that certain economic structures or cultural contexts may be more conducive to women's economic engagement. The CAR's pattern may reflect indigenous cultural traditions that provide greater economic roles for women, while Western Visayas benefits from diverse economic opportunities including services, manufacturing, and trade that offer more formal sector employment for women.

The persistent challenges in regions like Region V (Bicol) and Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula), where female labor force participation remains below 50%, highlight how geographic isolation, limited economic diversification, and security concerns can compound gender inequality. These patterns suggest that women in certain regions face particularly severe constraints on their economic participation, reflecting intersecting disadvantages based on geography and gender.

### Unemployment and Gender Dynamics

While unemployment rates show generally improving trends across most regions, the gender patterns within these rates reveal important aspects of labor market inequality (**Table 26**). The relatively small gender gaps in unemployment rates across most regions might initially suggest gender parity in job access, but this interpretation requires careful consideration of the much lower female labor force participation rates. Women who do enter the labor market may face similar unemployment rates to men, but the much smaller proportion of women actively seeking employment suggests significant barriers to labor market entry rather than equality in employment outcomes.

**Table 26. Unemployment rate by region and sex (2019-2023)**

Region	2019			2021			2023		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.7</b>
NCR	4.2	2.3	3.2	5.1	3.7	4.4	2.9	2.3	2.6
CAR	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.7	2.9	3.3	2.5	1.8	2.2
Region I	2.9	1.8	2.4	3.5	4.5	4.0	2.2	1.7	1.9
Region II	1.9	1.7	1.8	3.0	2.3	2.7	3.0	1.1	2.0
Region III	4.1	2.5	3.3	3.8	2.6	3.2	2.8	1.9	2.4
CALABARZON	3.9	2.6	3.2	5.7	3.7	4.7	4.2	2.7	3.4
MIMAROPA	3.1	1.6	2.3	4.7	4.1	4.4	1.2	2.4	1.8
Region V	4.6	1.4	3.0	5.5	4.1	4.8	4.7	3.1	3.9
Region VI	3.3	2.2	2.7	3.9	2.3	3.1	2.2	2.3	2.2
Region VII	4.0	2.5	3.2	5.7	4.6	5.2	3.5	2.0	2.7
Region VIII	3.0	1.3	2.2	4.6	3.9	4.3	4.2	3.6	3.9
Region IX	3.0	2.4	2.7	3.0	2.4	2.7	3.2	1.7	2.4
Region X	2.9	1.9	2.4	2.8	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.1	2.5
Region XI	2.4	1.2	1.9	2.1	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.3

Region XII	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.2	3.3	2.7	2.5	1.8	2.2
CARAGA	4.2	2.2	3.3	3.8	2.9	3.4	2.9	3.0	2.9
BARMM	2.3	1.4	1.8	2.9	5.0	4.0	3.4	2.6	3.1

Source: Labor Force Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)

Further, as pointed out by Albert and Vizmanos (2017), women and men in the Philippines demonstrate markedly different employment patterns, with women predominantly concentrated in the services sector (71.0% versus 43.9% for men) particularly in education, healthcare, and retail, while men are more evenly distributed across agriculture (35.8%), services (43.9%), and industry (20.2%). Despite women outnumbering men nearly 2:1 in professional occupations, a larger share of employed women (42.0%) compared to men (36.1%) are engaged in vulnerable employment characterized by inadequate earnings, poor working conditions, and limited social protection. This paradox reveals how women's educational advantages and professional representation coexist with greater exposure to employment vulnerability, including significant overrepresentation in domestic work where 90% of household employees are female.

The NCR's unemployment patterns demonstrate how urban formal labor markets can provide more equitable access to employment opportunities for women who participate in the labor force. The region's unemployment rates show minimal gender differences, and the overall decline from 4.4% in 2021 to 2.6% in 2023 suggests robust job creation that benefits both men and women. However, this must be interpreted alongside the persistent gap in labor force participation, indicating that while formal sector opportunities exist, barriers to women's labor market entry remain significant even in the most economically developed region.

Regional variations in unemployment also reflect different economic structures and their implications for gender equality. Regions with more diversified economies and stronger service sectors tend to show smaller gender gaps in unemployment, while those dependent on traditional industries or affected by economic volatility demonstrate more pronounced disparities. The improvement in unemployment rates across most regions from 2021 to 2023 suggests economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic, but the differential impacts on men and women reveal how economic shocks can affect gender inequality in complex ways.

### **Job Quality for Women and Men**

Underemployment rates provide perhaps the most revealing insights into gender inequality patterns across Philippine regions, as they capture not just access to employment but the quality and adequacy of work available to women and men (**Table 27**). The persistently high underemployment rates across most regions, with national averages fluctuating between 8.7% and 9.1%, indicate widespread challenges in creating sufficient quality employment opportunities. However, the consistent gender gaps in underemployment—with men typically experiencing higher rates than women—require careful interpretation within the broader context of labor market inequality.

**Table 27. Underemployment rate by region and sex (2019-2023)**

Region	2019			2021			2023		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>8.7</b>
NCR	4.9	3.0	3.9	7.4	3.6	5.5	6.0	4.3	5.1
CAR	14.7	9.4	12.1	15.2	9.5	12.4	13.8	8.7	11.3
Region I	11.0	8.2	9.6	11.7	6.3	9.0	11.0	6.3	8.6
Region II	14.2	6.9	10.6	17.2	9.4	13.5	14.7	6.4	10.7
Region III	8.6	4.9	6.8	7.8	4.1	6.0	7.7	3.9	5.8
CALABARZON	10.0	5.7	7.8	9.5	6.6	8.1	10.0	6.0	8.0
MIMAROPA	16.0	8.8	12.5	20.2	10.9	15.7	10.3	4.7	7.5
Region V	17.0	8.8	12.9	16.5	9.3	13.0	14.7	7.9	11.4
Region VI	12.2	6.1	9.2	14.3	7.3	10.9	12.6	4.9	8.7
Region VII	14.0	7.1	10.6	12.7	6.7	9.7	7.9	5.5	6.7
Region VIII	19.2	8.7	14.1	16.5	7.8	12.3	16.5	7.1	11.9
Region IX	14.6	5.9	10.3	16.3	7.3	11.8	15.8	7.2	11.5
Region X	12.7	8.3	10.5	12.4	6.4	9.5	15.1	7.5	11.4
Region XI	10.2	5.1	7.7	9.6	4.1	7.0	11.2	4.4	7.9
Region XII	14.0	7.2	10.7	16.1	7.4	11.9	23.1	11.4	17.4
CARAGA	18.3	9.8	14.2	15.0	8.4	11.8	16.4	8.1	12.5
BARMM	5.7	1.7	3.7	10.8	3.0	6.9	16.9	8.6	12.9

Source: Labor Force Survey, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)

The higher male underemployment rates paradoxically coexist with much higher male labor force participation, suggesting that men are more likely to accept inadequate employment rather than remaining outside the labor force, while women facing similar employment quality constraints may choose not to participate in the labor market at all. This pattern indicates that traditional measures of underemployment may underestimate the full extent of gender inequality in labor market outcomes, as they only capture the experiences of those already in the workforce.

Regional patterns in underemployment reveal how local economic structures affect gender inequality differently across the country. The NCR's relatively low underemployment rates for both men and women suggest that urban formal labor markets provide better quality employment opportunities. However, the persistence of underemployment even in this economically advanced region indicates that quality employment creation remains a challenge throughout the Philippines.

The dramatic increase in underemployment in Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN) from 11.9% in 2021 to 17.4% in 2023 illustrates how regional economic shocks can exacerbate gender inequality. The particularly sharp increase in female underemployment in this region, from 7.4% to 11.4%, suggests that women may be disproportionately affected by economic volatility, possibly due to their concentration in more vulnerable employment sectors or their limited access to alternative employment opportunities.

## Sectoral Employment Patterns and Vulnerable Work

The informal employment rate exceeds 70% for both sexes, though women face particular vulnerabilities within informal work arrangements due to limited access to social protection and greater exposure to precarious working conditions.

Despite women outnumbering men nearly 2:1 in professional occupations, a larger share of employed women (42.0%) compared to men (36.1%) are engaged in vulnerable employment characterized by inadequate earnings, poor working conditions, and limited social protection. This paradox reveals how women's educational advantages and professional representation coexist with greater exposure to employment vulnerability, including significant overrepresentation in domestic work where 90% of household employees are female.

Women demonstrated superior protection coverage rates compared to men across both major social insurance systems in the Philippines (**Table 28**). In the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), approximately three out of five women employed in the public sector held GSIS membership, significantly outpacing their male counterparts where only two out of five men in government positions were covered by the system. However, both sexes experienced declining GSIS coverage rates between 2016 and 2022, a trend that likely reflects the government's increasing reliance on contractual service workers who may not qualify for full GSIS benefits.

**Table 28. GSIS and SSS membership, by sex**

	Member of a social security system		Estimated workers from the Labor Force Survey		Member of a social security system, % of estimated workers in each sex category	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>GSIS*</b>						
2016	1102504	589566	1758815	1521971	63	39
2022	1378314	721192	2289572	1885377	60	38
<b>SSS, total**</b>						
2016	6270000	8000000	14388443	24,015,544	44	33
2022	6600000	10100000	17370589	26,114,194	38	39
<b>SSS, employed***</b>						
2016	4190000	6340000	7462122	14395052	56	44
2022	4610000	8320000	8770789	16429995	53	51
<b>SSS, self-employed and voluntary****</b>						
2016	1780000	1440000	6926321	9620492	26	15
2022	1720000	1510000	8599800	9684199	20	16

Source: Computations based on the data received from the SSS and GSIS, as well as the October round of the Labor

Force Survey (LFS). SSS data (as of June 2025) were received from the SSS Corporate Policy and Planning Department on July 17, 2025; GSIS data were received from the GSIS FOI on June 18, 2025.

Notes: \*Estimated workers from LFS: workers for the government/ government corporation.

\*\*Estimated workers from LFS: workers in private household/private establishment, Self-employed without any paid employees, Employer in own family-operated farm or business, Worked with/without pay in own family-operated farm or business.

\*\*\* Estimated workers from LFS: workers in private household/private establishment.

\*\*\*\*Estimated workers from LFS: self-employed without any paid employees, Employer in own family-operated farm or business, Worked with/without pay in own family-operated farm or business.

The Social Security System (SSS) coverage patterns revealed more complex gender-differentiated trends over the same period. Women's SSS membership rates declined by six percentage points from 2016 to 2022, despite a five percent growth in the absolute number of women SSS members. This apparent contradiction occurred because the growth in women's SSS membership failed to keep pace with the dramatic twenty percent increase in the total number of women working in private employment, self-employment, or as employers. Conversely, men experienced a six percentage point increase in SSS coverage rates during this period, driven by a substantial twenty-six percent growth in male SSS membership that far exceeded the nine percent growth in men engaged in private sector work, self-employment, or entrepreneurial activities.

The driving force behind improved male SSS coverage appears to be concentrated among men employed by private households and establishments. When examining the detailed breakdown by SSS member categories, this employment sector shows the most significant gains in male participation. These patterns suggest that while women maintained higher baseline coverage rates in both systems, the trajectory of change favored men in the private sector social security system, even as both genders faced challenges in maintaining government insurance coverage amid evolving employment structures.

### Digital Economy and Platform Work: Gender Dimensions

The emergence of internet or digital platforms has created new opportunities for women's economic participation while also reproducing existing inequalities in new forms. Analysis of platform work engagement reveals that women often use these opportunities to balance market participation with care responsibilities, though this integration comes with its own challenges (Table 29).

**Table 29. Contribution of the digital economy to employment and output: 2018 and 2024**

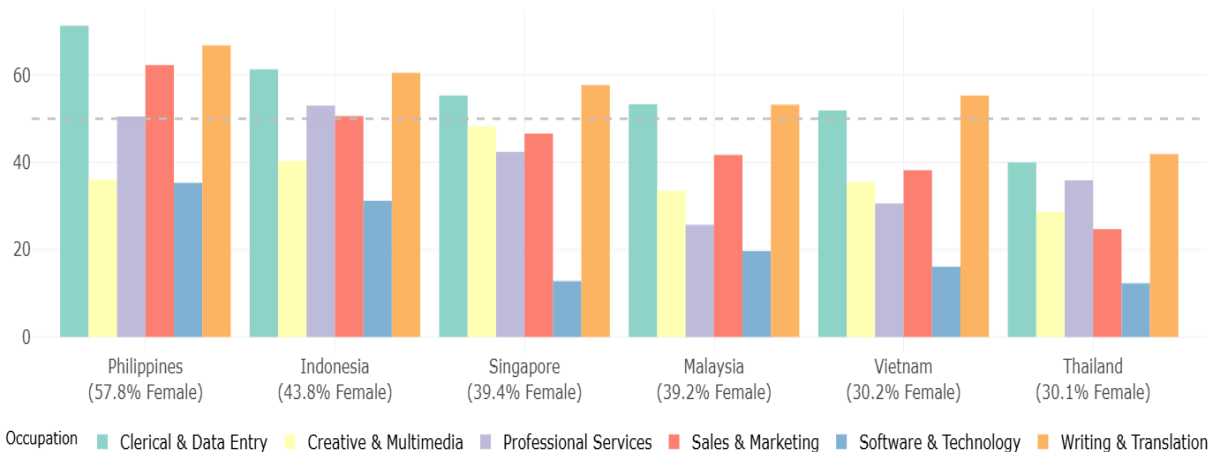
	2018	2024	6-year CAGR, %
<b>Employment</b>			
Digital Economy	6205	11303	11
National (Total Number of Employed Persons)	41157	48846	3
Share of Employment in Digital Economy to National, %	15	23	
<b>Output</b>			
GVA: Digital Economy (in million PhP)	1630182	2245872	5
Gross Domestic Product (GDP, in million PhP)	18265190	26446369	6
Share of Digital Economy to GDP, %	9	8	
<b>Gross Value Added (GVA) of Digital Economy by Component at Constant Prices (in million PhP)</b>			
Government digital services	3076	5504	10
E-commerce	155254	252043	8
Digital content and media	42417	48165	2
Digital-enabling infrastructure	1429435	1794878	4
ICT Manufacturing industries	392104	400337	0
ICT Trade industries	37335	38121	0
ICT Services industries	484463	715564	7
Telecommunication services	355967	530310	7
Software publishing	2970	3373	2
Computer Programming and consultancy	110451	164547	7
Data Processing, hosting, and web portals	4120	4678	2
Repair of computers and communication equipment	10955	12656	2
ICT-Enabled services	515533	640855	4

	2018	2024	6-year CAGR, %
Professional and business support services	515494	635576	4
Digital payment services	39	5279	126

Source: Authors' computation based on the Philippine Statistics Authority data downloaded from <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/digital-economy> on June 24, 2025.

**Figure 14** demonstrates occupational segregation patterns that corporate and entrepreneurial stakeholders confirm through their observations. From 2017 to 2024, the OLI 2020<sup>8</sup> indicated that the Philippines was among the top 15 countries in global workers' share, ranking 6<sup>th</sup> and accounting for 3.1% of the global online workforce. The same data indicates that the majority of women from the Philippines concentrate in clerical and data entry (71%), writing and translation (67%), and sales and marketing (62%) roles, while remaining underrepresented in high-value technical fields like software and technology (36%). These patterns can also be observed in other ASEAN member states, and consistent with similar findings that more women in platform work are into in clerical jobs and sales/marketing, while more men in technical fields such as engineering and architecture, data science and analytics, and information technology (Churchill and Craig 2019). It also reflects broader challenges around confidence and risk tolerance in technology adoption that female leaders consistently observe in their organizations.

**Figure 14. Female online workers, % of total and per occupation**



Source: OLI 2020. Downloaded from <https://ilabour.shinyapps.io/WorkerMap/> on June 26, 2025

Among individuals engaged in platform work, women spent significantly more time on care work, a trend that persisted both before and during the pandemic (**Table 30**).

<sup>8</sup> “The OLI 2020, maintained by the Oxford Internet Institute and the University of Oxford, is an extension of the Online Labour Index, which track all projects/tasks posted on the five largest English-language online labor platforms. These represent at least 70% of the market by traffic. Since 2020, the OLI 2020 covers six non-English language platforms (three in Spanish and three in Russian).” (<http://onlinelabourobservatory.org/oli-demand/>).

**Table 30. Considerations in platform engagement, %**

	Flexibility	Housework	Pursuit of other interests	Additional income	Better pay	Savings from travel costs	Better skills match
<b>Sex and Presence of Child/ren &lt;=6yo</b>							
Female - with child <=6yo	21	52	20	29	25	29	27
Female - w/o child <=6yo	42	29	50	41	36	46	46
Male - with child <=6yo	10	5	08	8	11	8	5
Male - w/o child <=6yo	27	13	22	23	28	18	22
<b>Sex and Highest grade completed</b>							
Female - at least college	56	65	57	60	61	54	50
Female - less than college	16	18	17	12	16	13	11
Male - at least college	24	16	20	26	20	31	32
Male - less than college	4	1	6	2	3	2	8
<b>Sex and Headship</b>							
Female - head	20	26	15	16	24	17	15
Female - non-head	51	57	59	57	52	50	45
Male - head	11	9	7	11	10	11	13
Male - non-head	18	9	19	16	13	22	27
<b>Sex and Marital status</b>							
Female - married	27	41	26	30	27	24	19
Female - single	45	41	49	42	50	43	40
Male - married	6	4	2	6	7	7	9
Male - single	22	13	23	22	17	26	31
<b>Sex and Urbanity</b>							
Female - urban	55	67	53	53	58	52	49
Female - rural	17	16	21	19	19	15	10
Male - urban	20	11	17	16	19	23	36
Male - rural	8	6	8	11	04	10	4

Source: Authors' tabulation based on the 2020 PIDS-DICT Market and Non-Market Online Survey

Limiting the samples to those engaged in platform work indicated no gender difference in the hours spent on non-market work when platform work was not the primary job. However, women spent more time, notably on care work, when platform work was the primary job, likely reflecting the usefulness of platform work in women's efforts to participate in market work while performing non-market work.

How did non-market work intersect with platform work? Testing the difference in hours/week spent on care work and housework between the sexes suggests that among those not engaged in platform work, women spent more time on both activities (**Table 31**). This was observed before and during the pandemic. Among those engaged in platform work, women spent significantly more time on care work, a trend that persisted both before and during the pandemic. In summary, Tables 27-29 on digital economy participation and platform work reveal emerging patterns that stakeholder interviews confirm as significant for women's economic empowerment. Table 30 shows that women engaged in platform work cited flexibility (73%) and additional income (62%) as primary motivations, but Table 31 reveals that women platform workers still spend significantly more time on care work than men, suggesting that digital work has not fundamentally altered gender-based care work distributions.

**Table 31. Difference in the time spent on housework and care work, by platform work participation**

		Mean hours/week		Difference	Standard error
		Male	Female		
<b><i>Not engaged in platform work</i></b>					
Care work	A month before the ECQ	11.43	19.96	-8.53***	1.7
Housework	A Month before the ECQ	18.10	23.51	-5.40***	1.5
Care work	During the ECQ	17.17	26.09	-8.92***	2.2
Housework	During the ECQ	24.64	31.18	-6.54***	1.5
<b><i>Engaged in platform work</i></b>					
Care work	A month before the ECQ	14.89	20.62	-5.72*	3.6
Housework	A month before the ECQ	22.06	21.73	0.33	2.5
Care work	During the ECQ	16.98	24.62	-7.64***	4.2
Housework	During the ECQ	25.11	26.50	-1.39	2.8
<b><i>Platform work is not the primary job</i></b>					
Care work	A month before the ECQ	21.50	16.55	4.95	6.0
Housework	A month before the ECQ	20.96	20.55	0.41	4.0
Care work	During the ECQ	23.69	20.74	2.95	7.0
Housework	During the ECQ	24.54	27.05	-2.51***	4.0
<b><i>Platform work is the primary job</i></b>					
Care work	A month before the ECQ	10.49	23.07	-12.59***	4.0
Housework	A month before the ECQ	22.79	22.45	0.35	3.0
Care work	During the ECQ	12.51	26.97	-14.46***	5.0
Housework	During the ECQ	25.49	26.17	-0.68***	4.0

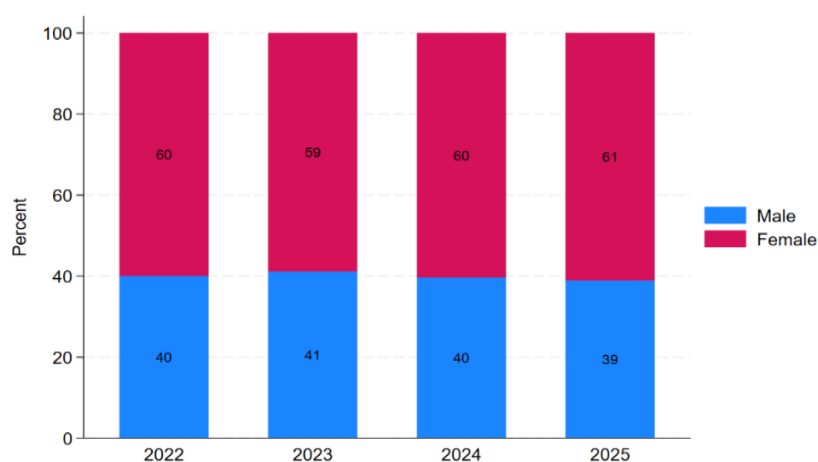
Source: Authors' computation using 2020 PIDS-DICT Online Survey of Market and Non-Market Work.

Notes: \*/\*\*\*Significant at 10/1% level, left-sided test. Number of observations (engaged or not engaged in platform work): Male without platform work (249), female without platform work (387), male with platform work (65), and female with platform work (154). Number of observations (platform work is not primary or primary job): male, not primary (26), female, not primary (58), male, primary (39), female, primary (96).

## Entrepreneurship and Business Development

Business registration patterns reveal important gender dynamics (**Figure 15**), while sectoral analysis shows how women's entrepreneurship is distributed across different economic activities (**Table 32**).

**Figure 15. Business registrations of sole proprietors by sex, %**



Source: Authors' compilation from DTI BNRS-BN Statistics. Last updated on June 15, 2025.

**Table 32. Sectoral disaggregation of enterprises, %**

	Male-led/owned enterprise	Female-led/owned enterprise
Food	5	7
Fabricated metal products	1	1
Other manufacturing products	7	5
Retail services	31	41
Hotel and restaurant services	2	3
Professional services	3	2
Other services	50	41

Source: Authors' computation based on the 2024 World Bank Enterprise Survey

Women's business ownership shows regional and sectoral variations (**Table 33**), though barriers to entrepreneurship remain significant. Perceptions of entrepreneurial challenges differ by sex (**Figure 16**), as do access patterns to financial services (**Figure 17**).

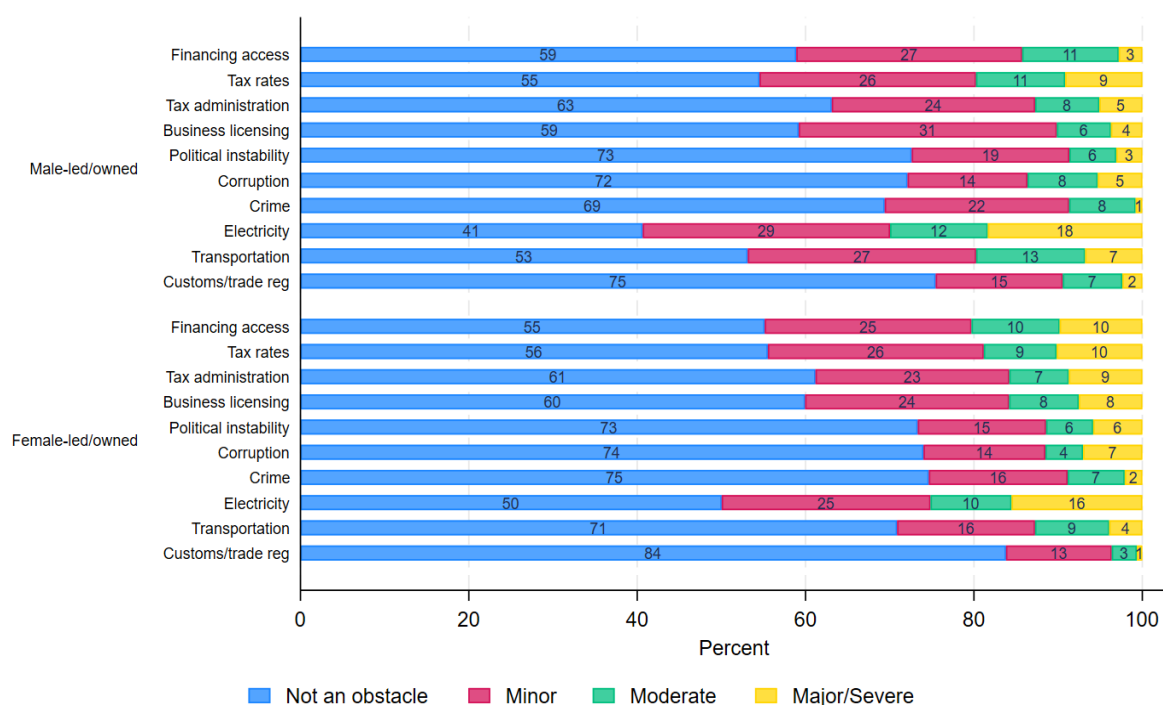
**Table 33. Share (in %) of women entrepreneurs**

	<i>With financial instruments</i>					Index: Financial inclusion
	Online bank account	E-mobile account	Debit card	Credit card	Cash card	
No	88	78	87	96	88	93
Yes	12	22	13	4	12	7
	<i>Use of ICT devices</i>				Index: Use of ICT devices	
	Desktop	Laptop	Tablet	Smartphone		
No	99	89	99	41	88	
Yes	1	11	1	59	12	
	<i>Access to the internet using ICT devices</i>				Index: Internet access through ICT devices	
	Desktop	Laptop	Tablet	Smartphone		
No	99	91	100	45	96	
Yes	1	9	0	55	4	

Source: Authors' computation based on the 2022 Women on ICT Development Index Survey

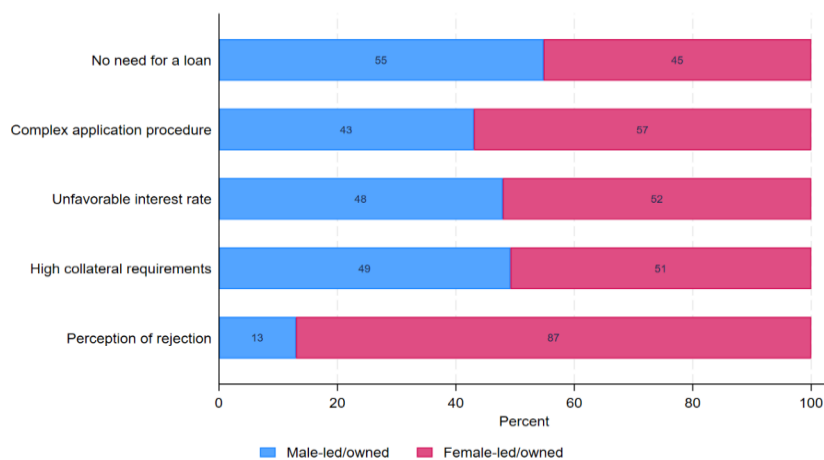
Note: Population size: 44451

**Figure 16. Perceptions on entrepreneurial barriers**



Source: Authors' computation based on the 2024 World Bank Enterprise Survey

**Figure 17. Loan-related information, by sex**



Source: Authors' computation based on the 2024 World Bank Enterprise Survey.

Notes: Population sizes are obtained using the *wstrict* weight in the data. Population size: No need for a loan 61339; Complex application procedures 1795; Unfavorable interest rates 5748; High collateral requirements 1760; Perception of rejection 1599.

## Employment Rates for Persons with Disabilities

Employment rates for persons with disabilities remain substantially lower than the general population, though comprehensive recent data is limited. The International Labour Organization notes significant disparities between men and women with disabilities in educational attainment, employment, income, and policy awareness, with females earning only one-third the income of men with similar characteristics.

Discrimination toward persons with disabilities in employment remains common, with women with disabilities facing compounded disadvantage and discrimination. Employers often lack understanding of reasonable accommodation requirements and hold prejudicial attitudes about the capabilities of workers with disabilities.

### **Workplace Accommodation Provisions**

Workplace accommodation provisions remain inadequate across most sectors of the Philippine economy. While the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons establishes requirements for reasonable accommodations, implementation is inconsistent and often depends on individual employer initiatives rather than systematic compliance mechanisms.

The absence of comprehensive monitoring and enforcement mechanisms limits the effectiveness of accommodation requirements. Many employers lack information about accommodation options and their costs, while government support for accommodation implementation remains limited.

### **Skills Development and Vocational Training**

Skills development and vocational training programs for persons with disabilities require substantial expansion and improvement. While some specialized programs exist, they often provide training in limited occupational areas and may not align with current labor market demands.

TESDA programs have begun incorporating some disability inclusion elements, but systematic integration across all training programs remains incomplete. Access barriers including transportation, communication supports, and assistive technologies limit participation in available programs.

## **6.4. SDG11.2: Accessible Transportation Systems**

### **Public Transport Accessibility Improvements**

Public transportation accessibility in the Philippines remains inadequate for persons with disabilities, though some improvements have been implemented in recent years. The Department of Transportation has initiated some accessibility upgrades to public transport vehicles and infrastructure, but comprehensive accessibility across the transport system requires substantial additional investment.

Metro Manila's rail systems have incorporated some accessibility features, including wheelchair-accessible cars and platform modifications. However, the broader public transport network, including buses, jeepneys, and provincial transport systems, largely lacks accessibility features.

### **Infrastructure Development Compliance**

Building codes and infrastructure development standards include accessibility requirements, but compliance monitoring and enforcement remain weak. Many public buildings, including government offices, schools, and healthcare facilities, lack basic accessibility features such as ramps, accessible restrooms, and appropriate signage.

The Accessibility Law requires public buildings to meet accessibility standards, but implementation varies significantly across different levels of government and regions. Local government units often lack technical expertise and resources to ensure effective compliance with accessibility requirements.

### **Urban-Rural Accessibility Disparities**

Accessibility disparities between urban and rural areas are pronounced, with rural communities typically having more limited transportation options and less accessible infrastructure. Geographic isolation compounds disability-related barriers in rural areas, where specialized services and equipment are often unavailable.

Rural transportation systems rely heavily on informal providers who may lack resources or knowledge to implement accessibility modifications. The absence of accessible transport options severely limits educational, employment, and healthcare access for rural persons with disabilities.

## **6.5. SDG16.7: Inclusive Decision-Making**

### **Participation in Governance Structures**

Participation of persons with disabilities in governance structures remains limited across all levels of government. While legal frameworks require representation of persons with disabilities in some government bodies, meaningful participation is often constrained by accessibility barriers and limited support mechanisms. Historically, the General Appropriations Act included a 2003 provision mandating budget allocations for programs for persons with disabilities and senior citizens (akin to the GAD budget), but this earmark was removed beginning in 2013; more recent guidance (e.g., the 2023 DBM–DSWD–NCSC–NCDA JMC) emphasizes mainstreaming rather than a fixed set-aside, which has weakened predictable funding for participation and support.

The NCDA provides a mechanism for disability representation in national policy-making, but local-level representation varies significantly. Many Local Councils for the Protection of Children and other governance bodies lack meaningful participation from persons with disabilities.

### **Consultation Mechanisms Effectiveness**

Consultation mechanisms for persons with disabilities require substantial improvement to ensure meaningful participation in policy development. Government agencies often conduct consultations without adequate accessibility accommodations, limiting effective participation by persons with different types of disabilities.

The "nothing about us, without us" principle, central to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is inconsistently applied in Philippine policy-making processes. Consultation processes often occur late in policy development and may not adequately incorporate disability perspectives into final policies.

### **Representative Organization Capacity**

Organizations of persons with disabilities in the Philippines face capacity constraints that limit their effectiveness in advocacy and representation. Limited funding, technical resources, and institutional support restrict their ability to participate effectively in policy-making processes.

The diversity of disability types and experiences requires representative organizations that can address the full spectrum of disability issues. However, many organizations focus on specific disability types or geographic areas, limiting comprehensive representation in national policy discussions.

## 7. Disability

### 7.1. Prevalence, Educational Attainment and Ethnicity

The 2016 NDPS reveals significant intersectional patterns in disability prevalence across demographic characteristics, highlighting how disability experiences vary by sex, employment status, educational attainment, and ethnicity. Women consistently experience higher disability prevalence rates than men across virtually all demographic categories. The overall female disability rate (15%) is 50% higher than the male rate (10%), with this gender gap persisting across work status, education levels, and ethnic groups.

These prevalence estimates reflect the NDPS methodology's comprehensive approach to disability measurement, which captures the complex interaction between health conditions and environmental factors. This approach tends to identify higher prevalence rates than traditional functional limitation measures like the Washington Group Short Set, which focuses primarily on basic functional difficulties.

A concordance analysis (**Table 34**) shows that the NDPS severe disability classification demonstrates moderate agreement ( $\kappa=0.464$ ) with Washington Group standards. Thus, while the two methodologies identify overlapping populations with significant functional limitations, they capture distinct aspects of the disability experience. This suggests the approaches are complementary rather than interchangeable for identifying individuals with substantial support needs.

**Table 34. Methodological concordance between NDPS severe and Washington Group classifications**

Concordance Measure	Value	Interpretation
Kappa Coefficient	0.464	Moderate Agreement
Overall Agreement	90.46%	High consensus on population without severe limitations
Sensitivity	42.53%	NDPS severe captures 43% of WG-identified disability
Specificity	96.92%	Excellent - rarely misclassifies non-disabled
Positive Predictive Value	65.99%	Two-thirds of NDPS severe also meet WG criteria

Source: 2016 NDPS, PSA

Note: Authors' computations on NDPS microdata

As regards employment (**Table 35**), the highest severe disability rates appear among those not working (21%) and those in unpaid family farm work (19%). Notably, women in paid family farm work show exceptionally high severe disability rates (25%), highlighting the intersection of gender, informal economy participation, and severe disability. Government employment

shows relatively moderate rates (9% overall) but maintains the gender gap (5% male vs. 13% female).

**Table 35. Disability prevalence by sex and employment status**

<b>Current Work Situation</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>
Not working	23%	20%	21%
Worked for private household	7%	8%	7%
Worked for private establishment	5%	11%	7%
Worked for government/government corporation	5%	13%	9%
Self-employed without an employee	10%	13%	11%
Employer in own family-operated farm/business	12%	16%	13%
Worked with pay in own family operated farm business	9%	25%	18%
Worked without pay in own family operated farm business	12%	23%	19%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>

Source: 2016 NDPS, PSA

Note: Authors' computations on NDPS microdata

A clear inverse relationship exists between educational attainment and severe disability prevalence (**Table 36**). Individuals with no formal education show the highest rates (39% overall, with women reaching 55%, while college graduates show the lowest rates (6% overall). This pattern suggests education may serve as both a protective factor against severe disability and a pathway for people with severe disabilities to achieve better outcomes.

**Table 36. Disability prevalence by sex and educational attainment**

<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>
None up to preschool	23%	55%	39%
Primary or SPED	15%	24%	19%
Secondary	8%	12%	10%
Post secondary	12%	21%	17%
College	5%	8%	6%
Post baccalaureate	5%	10%	8%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>

Source: 2016 NDPS, PSA

Note: Authors' computations on NDPS microdata

Severe disability prevalence varies substantially across ethnic groups (**Table 37**), with Waray speakers showing the highest overall rates (21%) and Tagalog speakers the lowest (9%). However, the gender gap persists across all ethnic groups, with Waray women experiencing particularly high rates (31%) compared to Waray men (11%).

**Table 37. Disability prevalence by sex and ethnicity**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Both Sexes</b>
Tagalog	7%	11%	9%
Cebuano	11%	16%	14%
Ilocano	5%	17%	10%
Hiligaynon	10%	16%	13%
Bikol	14%	16%	15%
Waray	11%	31%	21%
Kapampangan	11%	11%	11%
Others	11%	16%	13%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>

Source: 2016 NDPS, PSA

Note: Authors' computations on NDPS microdata

The intersectional patterns revealed above demonstrate why the choice of disability measurement methodology has profound implications for understanding population needs and targeting interventions. The NDPS methodology's environmental and contextual focus allows it to capture disability experiences that would remain invisible under purely functional assessments.

The most striking methodological implications emerge when examining groups experiencing multiple disadvantages. For women with no formal education, the NDPS approach identifies severe disability at rates that would likely be substantially higher than Washington Group assessments of disability would capture, given that functional limitation measures may miss the complex ways that gender discrimination, educational exclusion, and environmental barriers interact to create disabling conditions.

The exceptionally high rates among women in agricultural work (25% in paid family farm work, 23% in unpaid work) highlight how the NDPS methodology captures severe disability arising from the intersection of gender roles, economic marginalization, and rural environmental barriers. Traditional functional limitation approaches might miss how agricultural work environments, combined with gender-based resource constraints, create disabling conditions even in the absence of severe functional impairments.

The dramatic variation across ethnic groups, particularly the 31% rate among Waray women, suggests that the NDPS methodology successfully identifies how cultural, linguistic, and regional barriers compound other disadvantages to create disabling experiences. This environmental and contextual sensitivity is crucial for understanding disability in diverse, multicultural contexts.

These findings demonstrate that measurement choice directly impacts which populations are prioritized for services and support. The NDPS methodology's ability to identify additional individuals experiencing severe disability through intersectional disadvantages—while maintaining moderate concordance with the Washington Group definition—provides a more comprehensive foundation for inclusive policy development that addresses the complex, multifaceted nature of disability in diverse populations.

The moderate rather than perfect concordance between methodologies ultimately strengthens the argument for comprehensive approaches that can capture the full spectrum of disability experiences, particularly among those facing intersectional disadvantages where social,

economic, and environmental barriers compound to create complex patterns of exclusion and limitation.

## 7.2. Employment of Persons with Disabilities

Employment rates for persons with disabilities remain substantially lower than the general population. The International Labour Organization notes significant disparities between men and women with disabilities in educational attainment, employment, income, and policy awareness, with females earning only one-third the income of men with similar characteristics.

Discrimination toward persons with disabilities in employment remains common, with women with disabilities facing compounded disadvantage and discrimination. Employers often lack understanding of reasonable accommodation requirements and hold prejudicial attitudes about the capabilities of workers with disabilities.

PWDs face particular challenges in accessing decent work opportunities, with lower labor force participation rates and higher underemployment across most regions. Women with disabilities encounter compounded barriers that limit both their labor market access and the quality of available employment opportunities (**Table 38**).

**Table 38. Market outcomes for females with disabilities in 2022, %**

	Handicap					
	Seeing	Hearing	Climbing	Concentrating	Self-caring	Communicating
<b>Work status and level of handicap</b>						
Not working - Some handicap	68	66	73	66	76	91
Not working - Full handicap	8	15	14	12	16	2
Working - Some handicap	23	19	13	21	7	8
Population size	54588	47507	57827	36721	21078	12254
<b>Income and level of handicap</b>						
No income - Some handicap	1	87	84	98	99	98
No income - Full handicap				2		
PhP1-4999 - Full handicap	1					
PhP1-4999 - Some handicap	79	13	14		1	2
PhP5000-9999 - Some handicap	9		2			
PhP10000-19999 - Some handicap	4					
PhP20000-29999 - Some handicap	1					
PhP50000-59999 - Some handicap	5					
Population size	12902	8803	7616	7947	1546	944

Source: Authors' computation based on the 2022 Women on ICT Development Index Survey

Digital access barriers compound employment challenges, particularly for women with disabilities who face multiple forms of exclusion from emerging economic opportunities (**Table 39**).

**Table 39. Access to the internet and financial inclusion of females with disabilities in 2022, %**

	Difficulties in:					
	Seeing	Hearing	Climbing	Concentrating	Self-caring	Communicating
<b><i>Use of ICT devices and Level of handicap</i></b>						
Without access - Some handicap	91	84	86	86	84	98
Without access - Full handicap	08	15	14	13	16	2
With access - Some handicap	1	1	1	1		
<b><i>Access to the internet using ICT devices and Level of handicap</i></b>						
Without access - Some handicap	91	84	86	86	84	98
Without access - Full handicap	08	15	14	13	16	2
With access - Some handicap	1	1	1	1		
<b><i>Financial inclusion and Level of handicap</i></b>						
Financially not included - Some handicap	89	85	86	84	84	98
Financially not included - Full handicap	9	15	14	13	16	2
Financially included - Some handicap	2			3		
Population size	54588	47507	57827	36721	21078	12254

Source: Authors' computation based on the 2022 Women on ICT Development Index Survey

Dianito et al. (2021) emphasized the challenges encountered by PWD students in transitioning to online learning. Limited access to assistive technologies, unreliable internet connectivity, and the absence of inclusive learning materials significantly hindered their ability to participate in digital education. These technical and structural obstacles deepened existing inequalities, leaving many PWD students marginalized.

Tables 38-39 (Market outcomes and access for females with disabilities) highlight compound marginalization that stakeholder interviews extensively documented. Government officials interviewed note that "rural women with disabilities face both stigma and transport challenges" while one-off programs "miss these overlaps." Infrastructure assessments suggest that making training centers disability-accessible could require 100 million pesos per facility compared to 40 million for standard construction, indicating the significant investment needed for truly inclusive programming.

HR professionals working on inclusive employment note that disability inclusion requires systematic accommodation and support that goes beyond basic accessibility measures. Early cohort data show promising results, with 15% increases in women reaching director level within three years of inclusive program launch and 12% reductions in turnover among diverse hires, suggesting that comprehensive approaches can generate both social and business value.

In addition to technical barriers, societal biases and inadequate policy implementation contribute to the exclusion of PWDs. Dianito et al. (2021) highlighted how many PWDs relied heavily on family and community support to navigate these challenges. While these support systems underscored the resilience of PWDs, they also revealed the absence of institutional mechanisms to ensure equitable access to education. These findings align with David et al. (2018), who identified systemic gaps in addressing the needs of marginalized groups within national policies aimed at achieving SDG5 and SDG10.

## 8. Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Rights

In the Philippines, IPs face systematic exclusion across multiple dimensions of socio-economic development that exemplifies the most complex forms of intersectional disadvantage in the country. The intersection of historical injustices, systemic discrimination, and contemporary development pressures creates complex barriers that require comprehensive policy responses informed by both research evidence and lived experiences of indigenous communities. **Table 40** reveals that IPs comprise 9.46 million people or 8.7% of the Philippines' population, with 8.21 million non-Muslim Indigenous Peoples (7.6%) and 1.25 million belonging to both Indigenous and Muslim ethnic groups (1.1%). When combined with Muslim ethnic groups (5.87 million or 5.4%), ethnic minorities represent over 14% of the national population, yet remain among the most marginalized communities experiencing intersecting disadvantages across ethnicity, geography, gender, and economic status.

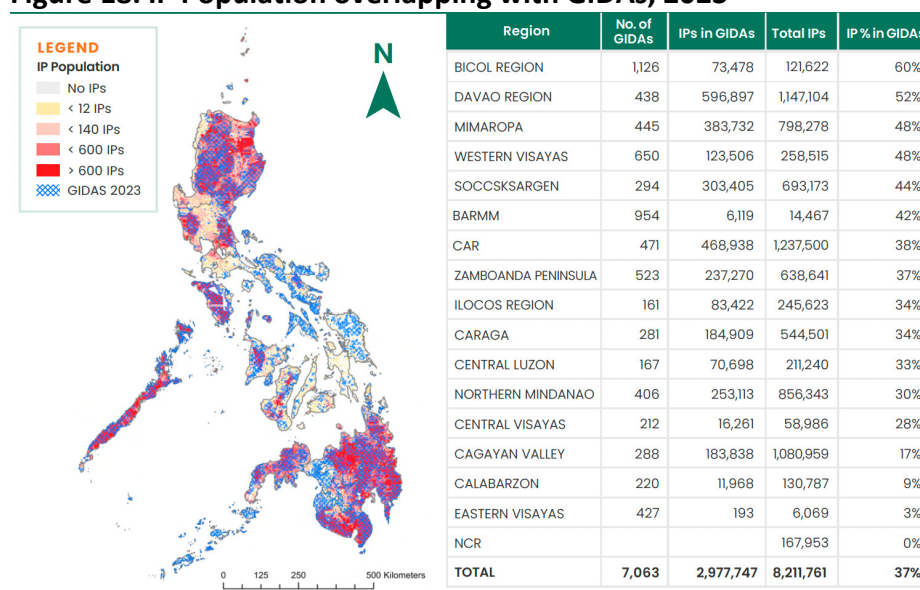
**Table 40. Summary of population distribution by ethnic category, Philippines 2020**

Category	Population (millions)	Share (%)
IPs (non-Muslim)	8.21	7.6%
IP and Muslim ethnic groups	1.25	1.1%
Muslim ethnic groups	5.87	5.4%
Non-IP	93.09	85.7%
<b>Total IP Population</b>	<b>9.46</b>	<b>8.7%</b>

Source: Pérez-Brito et al., 2024, based on 2020 Census of Population and Housing

Geographic isolation compounds ethnic disadvantage through spatial concentration in areas with limited infrastructure and service access. **Figure 18** demonstrates that 2.9 million Indigenous Peoples (37% of the total Indigenous population) live in GIDAs, where access to basic services, markets, and economic opportunities is severely constrained (Pérez-Brito et al., 2024). This geographic disadvantage intersects with ethnic identity to create "place-based ethnic exclusion" where Indigenous communities face barriers both because of who they are and where they live.

**Figure 18. IP Population overlapping with GIDAs, 2023**



Source: Pérez-Brito et al., 2024, based on WB and NCIP Databases and Portal based on CPH 2020.

Table 41 reveals the complex interplay between ethnic and spatial dimensions of inequality by measuring between-groups variation using the Group Coefficient of Variation approach. The table demonstrates that spatial inequalities often exceed ethnic disparities, particularly at the provincial level where geographic disadvantage creates substantial gaps in infrastructure access. Hospital access shows the most extreme spatial inequality at 51.3%, indicating that where Indigenous communities live matters as much as their ethnic identity in determining access to healthcare services.

**Table 41. Between-groups inequality across key development indicators, 2020**

Indicator	Ethnicity Gap (%)	Regional Gap (%)	Provincial Gap (%)
Years of schooling	10.1	11.3	19.3
Improved sanitation	9.6	8.4	18.8
Female employment	2.9	13.1	7.7
Internet access	14.4	19.0	23.2
Hospital access	27.8	51.3	36.5

Source: CPH 2020 analysis from Pérez-Brito et al., 2024

However, education represents a critical exception where ethnic disparities (10.1%) approach spatial inequalities (11.3% regional, 19.3% provincial), suggesting that Indigenous identity itself creates educational barriers beyond those explained by geographic location alone. Internet access demonstrates pronounced ethnic gaps (14.4%) that compound with spatial disadvantages, reflecting how digital exclusion intersects with ethnic identity to limit Indigenous communities' participation in the modern economy. The relatively smaller ethnic gap in female employment (2.9%) compared to spatial gaps (13.1% regional) indicates that women's economic participation patterns vary more by location than ethnicity, though this masks the qualitative differences in types of employment available to Indigenous women versus non-Indigenous women.

Intersectional gender-ethnicity disadvantages are particularly pronounced among Indigenous women. The World Bank analysis reveals that "gender gaps in labor market participation are larger among Indigenous Peoples and Muslim ethnic groups, with Indigenous women's engagement in unpaid family work more than three times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts" (Pérez-Brito et al. 2024). Access to basic services demonstrates systematic intersectional exclusion: more households from Indigenous Peoples and Muslim ethnic groups lack access to improved drinking water, sanitation, and electric lighting compared to non-Indigenous populations, with significant proportions experiencing health difficulties, especially among elderly populations.

Educational exclusion reflects both ethnic and administrative barriers that compound over life course. Around 20% of Muslim ethnic groups and 10% of Indigenous Peoples lack birth registration and certificates, fundamentally limiting access to essential social and human-capital building services. Low levels of education among Indigenous and Muslim ethnic groups limit opportunities for employment in productive jobs: about half did not go beyond elementary school, compared to less than a third among non-Indigenous Peoples. This educational disadvantage intersects with employment patterns where more than half of working-age Indigenous and Muslim ethnic group members are engaged in agriculture, compared to 19% of non-Indigenous Peoples.

According to Pérez-Brito et al., 2024, the DSWD represents an exceptional example of intersectionality-responsive policy design through its IPs Framework. DSWD has integrated

multiple ethnicity variables to track support provided to Indigenous Peoples through social safety net programs, including self-identification at household level, type of ethnicity or ethnic group, and location-based identification.

Under the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer (MCCT) program for IPs in GIDAs, the DSWD explicitly addresses intersecting disadvantages of ethnicity and geographic isolation. The Indigenous Peoples Lens guides field implementation by recognizing how "the intersectionality of ethnicity, gender, and place of residence" creates distinctive barriers requiring culturally appropriate and geographically sensitive interventions.

Program reach demonstrates success: nearly 90% of IPs are aware of the 4Ps program, with 30% receiving assistance. However, challenges remain in ensuring full understanding of program conditionalities, with over half of Indigenous beneficiaries unaware of specific requirements, highlighting the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate program design.

Intersectional analysis reveals that spatial inequalities often exceed ethnic disparities while ethnic inequalities in education remain particularly pronounced. The analysis demonstrates that "ethnic inequality in education is significantly correlated to poverty and has a stronger impact than spatial inequality," while "spatial inequalities in public services delivery, particularly access to sanitation and internet emerge as strong correlates with poverty" (Pérez-Brito et al. 2024). This finding suggests that addressing intersectional disadvantage requires both place-based interventions (improving services in Indigenous territories) and ethnicity-specific programs (culturally appropriate education and birth registration initiatives).

The systematic exclusion of IPs demonstrates how multiple forms of disadvantage compound to create what the World Bank characterizes as "statistical invisibility" - where "Indigenous Peoples remain statistically hidden in the country, as they are not properly accounted for in national statistics" (Pérez-Brito et al. 2024). This analytical invisibility constitutes "the first layer of social, economic, and political exclusion" that undermines evidence-based policy development and prevents accurate understanding of intersectional poverty patterns affecting the Philippines' most marginalized communities.

### **8.1. *Land Rights and Ancestral Domain Protection***

The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (Republic Act No. 8371) of 1997 established a legislative framework aimed at rectifying colonial and historical injustices while addressing the poverty and marginalization faced by indigenous communities. The Act acknowledges the systemic dispossession and discrimination experienced by these communities and seeks to correct past errors through recognition of ancestral domain rights and self-determination. The NCIP serves as the primary government agency responsible for formulating and implementing policies for the economic, social, and cultural development of indigenous peoples, including the critical function of issuing certificates of ancestral land and domain titles.

However, significant gaps persist in the implementation of this progressive legislation. The Philippines voted in favor of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples but has yet to ratify International Labour Organisation Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989), indicating incomplete alignment with international standards for indigenous rights protection.

The NCIP's mandate encompasses not only titling functions but also the authority to enter into contracts and agreements with government and private agencies to obtain loans for financing programs supporting indigenous communities. Despite this institutional framework, the titling process remains slow and bureaucratically complex, leaving many communities vulnerable to land grabbing and unauthorized resource extraction.

Land tenure insecurity thus represents a critical persisting barrier that intersects with Indigenous identity to create fundamental asset exclusion. Despite the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, only 55 (22%) of the 257 approved Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) covering 20.5% of the country's total land area were fully registered as of early 2023, with 202 (78%) still pending registration (Pérez-Brito et al. 2024). This administrative limbo prevents Indigenous Peoples from accessing their most fundamental asset base, creating intergenerational poverty transmission through systematic exclusion from productive asset ownership.

### **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms**

The challenge of land rights protection becomes particularly acute in the context of development projects and natural resource extraction. Indigenous leaders who oppose mining or infrastructure projects on their ancestral lands face significant risks, including "red-tagging" (accusations of links with communist insurgents), which limits their ability to express their views and protect their cultural heritage and territorial rights. This intimidation creates a climate of fear that undermines legitimate advocacy for indigenous rights and environmental protection.

Increasing demand and competition for land and natural resources continue to threaten indigenous peoples' territorial security, agency, and cultural survival. The absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms exacerbates tensions between indigenous communities and external actors seeking to exploit natural resources within ancestral domains

### **Development Project Impact Assessments**

The requirement for free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) in development projects affecting ancestral domains represents a crucial protection mechanism, yet implementation remains inconsistent and often inadequate. Many development projects proceed without meaningful consultation with affected indigenous communities, while others involve consultations that fail to meet international standards for indigenous consent. The complexity of FPIC processes, combined with power imbalances between indigenous communities and project proponents, often results in decisions that do not adequately protect indigenous interests.

## **8.2. *Cultural Preservation and Traditional Knowledge***

### **Language Preservation Initiatives**

Cultural preservation represents both a fundamental right and a critical challenge for indigenous communities facing pressure to assimilate into mainstream Philippine society. Language preservation emerges as a particularly urgent concern, as many indigenous languages face extinction due to limited use in formal education, mass media, and official communication. The dominance of Tagalog and English in educational systems often marginalizes indigenous languages, contributing to intergenerational knowledge transfer disruption.

Research indicates that cultural preservation efforts must extend beyond language to encompass traditional governance systems, spiritual practices, and ecological knowledge that form the foundation of indigenous identity and community resilience.

### **Traditional Governance System Recognition**

The recognition of traditional governance systems within the broader Philippine political framework remains incomplete and contested. While the IPRA acknowledges the right of indigenous communities to maintain their traditional political structures, the integration of these systems with local government units (LGUs) often creates confusion and conflict over authority and jurisdiction. Traditional leaders may find their decision-making power undermined by formal political structures that fail to understand or respect indigenous governance principles.

Indigenous women's participation in traditional governance presents particular challenges, as customary practices may limit women's formal leadership roles while simultaneously recognizing their crucial influence in community decision-making.

### **Intellectual Property Protection Frameworks**

The protection of traditional knowledge and intellectual property represents a growing concern as globalization and commercialization threaten to appropriate indigenous innovations without community consent or benefit-sharing. Traditional ecological knowledge, medicinal practices, and artistic expressions face risks of unauthorized use and commercialization by external actors who may not recognize indigenous ownership rights or provide appropriate compensation.

Current intellectual property frameworks often fail to accommodate collective ownership models and oral traditions that characterize indigenous knowledge systems.

## **8.3. *Access to Basic Services in Indigenous Communities***

### **Health Service Delivery in Ancestral Domains**

IPs face numerous development challenges that impact their well-being and social inclusion, with inadequate access to quality social services perpetuating socioeconomic disparities that hamper community development. Health service delivery in ancestral domains confronts multiple barriers including geographical isolation, cultural insensitivity of service providers, and lack of recognition for traditional healing practices within formal healthcare systems.

The intersection of geographical remoteness and limited healthcare infrastructure creates particular vulnerabilities for indigenous communities, especially women and children who may require specialized services during pregnancy and childbirth.

Cultural barriers compound these geographical challenges, as healthcare providers often lack training in cultural competency and may not understand indigenous concepts of health and illness that integrate physical, spiritual, and social dimensions.

## **Educational Access and Cultural Appropriateness**

Educational access for indigenous children faces multiple barriers that extend beyond simple physical access to schools. The lack of culturally appropriate curricula, absence of instruction in indigenous languages, and disconnect between formal education content and indigenous knowledge systems create challenges for meaningful learning. Many indigenous children experience cultural alienation in conventional educational settings that fail to recognize the value of traditional knowledge and ways of learning.

The Updated Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Plan (2019-2025) highlights strategic actions for indigenous peoples, including eight points related to indigenous women's empowerment such as land ownership access, livelihood development, nature-based income sources, traditional food sources, and community enterprise development. However, unlike other strategic directions, these initiatives lack clear baselines or measurable targets, limiting accountability and progress monitoring.

## **Infrastructure Development and Consultation**

Infrastructure development in indigenous territories often proceeds without adequate consultation or consideration of cultural and environmental impacts. Roads, telecommunications, and energy projects may improve connectivity and access to services, but they can also disrupt traditional land use patterns and facilitate unwanted external pressures on indigenous communities. The challenge lies in ensuring that infrastructure development genuinely serves indigenous community needs rather than primarily benefiting external interests.

The limited availability of comprehensive data on indigenous peoples beyond generic census information exacerbates difficulties in accurately understanding and addressing specific needs and concerns. This data scarcity hinders the formulation of effective public policies and development of targeted interventions, perpetuating existing disparities in accessing appropriate essential services and impeding indigenous peoples' ability to participate actively and contribute to society.

The devolution of service delivery, if implemented without adequate safeguards, risks exacerbating social inequalities since populations within geographical areas may have less voice and greater social exclusion. Indigenous peoples' participation in LGU-level decision-making remains limited, and with LGUs' increasing role in public service delivery, there is a risk that individual well-being will be determined by geographic location and local political dynamics rather than universal rights and standards.

## **9. Policy Recommendations and Reform Priorities**

The evidence presented throughout this study demonstrates that achieving meaningful progress on GEDSI requires transformative changes across multiple policy domains, moving beyond traditional sector-specific approaches toward integrated interventions that address the intersectional nature of marginalization. The following recommendations emerge from systematic analysis of implementation gaps, stakeholder consultations, and international best practices, organized around four critical reform priorities that can collectively accelerate progress toward inclusive development.

## 9.1. *Legislative and Regulatory Reforms*

The Philippines requires comprehensive legislative harmonization to address contradictions and gaps between existing laws and international standards, particularly regarding disability rights and indigenous peoples' protections. Current implementation challenges stem partly from inconsistencies between the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which continue to emphasize impairment-based rather than rights-based approaches to disability assessment and service provision. Reform priorities should focus on aligning national legislation with international human rights standards while strengthening enforcement mechanisms that currently lack systematic implementation protocols.

Anti-discrimination legislation requires substantial strengthening through the establishment of comprehensive enforcement mechanisms with adequate resources and clear accountability structures. While legal frameworks exist to address discrimination based on gender, disability, and other characteristics, the absence of systematic data collection on discrimination experiences and weak enforcement mechanisms limit their effectiveness in ensuring equal opportunity. Legislative reforms should mandate regular discrimination experience surveys, establish specialized enforcement units within relevant agencies, and create accessible complaint mechanisms that accommodate diverse communication needs and cultural contexts.

Indigenous peoples' rights legislation requires urgent attention to address gaps in ancestral domain protection and cultural preservation mechanisms. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act needs strengthening through clearer implementation guidelines, enhanced consultation requirements for development projects affecting indigenous territories, and stronger penalties for violations of indigenous rights. Regulatory reforms should establish mandatory impact assessments for all infrastructure and development projects in indigenous territories, with free, prior, and informed consent protocols that respect traditional decision-making processes and timelines.

Gender equality legislation requires updating to address emerging challenges in the digital economy, and care work recognition. The Magna Carta of Women needs amendments to explicitly address gender-based discrimination in online work platforms, provide stronger protections for women in vulnerable employment, and establish mechanisms for valuing and supporting unpaid care work. Legislative priorities should include provisions for workplace accommodation requirements for pregnant and nursing mothers in all sectors, and recognition of care work in social protection calculations.

Political representation also requires legislative attention. The Philippines has no legislated gender quota for elected posts, relying instead on voluntary party commitments that have had limited impact on women's representation in Congress and local governments. Nor are there quotas for PWDs and IPs. Introducing temporary special measures such as candidate quotas or reserved seats could accelerate progress toward gender parity and social inclusion, consistent with international standards under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and in support of reducing inequalities. Legislative reform in this area should therefore prioritize mechanisms that ensure equitable participation of women, PWDs and IPs in decision-making processes at all levels of government.

## 9.2. *Budget and Resource Allocation*

Gender-responsive budgeting requires fundamental restructuring to move beyond compliance-oriented allocations toward transformational investments that address structural inequalities. Current five percent allocation requirements have become mechanistic exercises rather than strategic interventions, limiting their potential to create meaningful change in women's lives. While the National Expenditure Program (NEP) already includes outcome and output targets that are disaggregated by sex, these are not necessarily gender-sensitive. Budget reforms should therefore ensure that, where applicable, targets go beyond disaggregation and are designed to capture gender-specific barriers and outcomes. Reforms should also establish outcome-based allocation criteria that prioritize interventions with demonstrated impact on reducing gender gaps, implement multi-year budget commitments for comprehensive programs, and create dedicated funding streams for addressing intersectional inequalities.

Disability inclusion funding mechanisms require substantial expansion and systematic improvement to address current resource gaps and implementation challenges. The lack of allocated budget for Republic Act No. 11228, which mandates free health coverage for persons with disabilities via PhilHealth, exemplifies broader funding inadequacies that undermine policy effectiveness. Resource allocation reforms should establish dedicated disability inclusion funds at national and local levels, mandate accessibility compliance budgets for all public infrastructure projects, and create financial incentives for private sector disability inclusion initiatives.

Indigenous peoples' development fund utilization requires enhanced transparency, community control, and alignment with traditional governance systems. Current funding mechanisms often bypass indigenous decision-making processes and fail to respect cultural protocols, limiting their effectiveness in promoting genuine development. Budget reforms should establish community-controlled funding mechanisms that respect indigenous governance structures, provide multi-year grants that align with traditional planning cycles, and create accountability systems that incorporate indigenous evaluation criteria and success indicators.

## 9.3. *Institutional Capacity Building*

Government agency capability development requires systematic strengthening across all levels of administration, with particular attention to local government units that play increasingly critical roles in service delivery. The devolution of responsibilities to LGUs without corresponding capacity building investments has created significant disparities in service quality and access, particularly affecting vulnerable populations. Capacity building reforms should establish mandatory GEDSI training for all government personnel, create specialized technical assistance units to support LGU implementation, and develop mentorship programs that connect high-performing with lower-capacity jurisdictions. The word cloud in **Figure 19** synthesizes salient terms from PWD-focused KIIs and FGDs; it highlights the institutional levers most frequently cited by stakeholders: operations, budget and funds, data and collection, training, incentives, and coordination, with government and NCDA repeatedly foregrounded. After removing fillers and proper names, the pattern in the visual indicates that respondents view progress on inclusion as primarily a function of strengthening operational capacity, ensuring adequate and well-targeted financing, professionalizing training, and building interoperable data and monitoring systems, especially at the LGU level. This supports the argument that capacity building is not a discrete program but a system reform agenda that links funding, skills, and information flows to implementation quality.

**Figure 19: Institutional Enablers for PWD Inclusion**



Source: FGD/KIIs Conducted by the Authors

Civil society organization support mechanisms require substantial enhancement to recognize their critical role in policy implementation and community mobilization. Organizations representing persons with disabilities, women's groups, and indigenous peoples' organizations possess essential expertise and community connections that government agencies often lack. Institutional reforms should establish systematic funding for civil society capacity building, create formal partnership mechanisms that recognize CSOs as implementation partners rather than mere consultants, and develop collaborative governance structures that ensure meaningful participation in policy design and evaluation.

Multi-stakeholder coordination platforms require fundamental restructuring to overcome current fragmentation and ensure systematic collaboration across sectors and levels of government. Existing coordination mechanisms often operate in silos, limiting their ability to address intersectional challenges that require integrated responses. Institutional reforms should establish integrated GEDSI coordination units with representation from all relevant agencies, create joint planning and budgeting processes that require inter-agency collaboration, and develop shared monitoring systems that track progress across multiple dimensions of inclusion. Additionally, the capacity of oversight bodies should be enhanced to ensure proper utilization of funds and accountability. This involves addressing systemic inefficiencies and societal biases that limit the effectiveness of gender and disability inclusion policies.

Professional development systems require comprehensive updating to ensure that service providers across all sectors possess the knowledge and skills necessary for inclusive service delivery. Current training programs often address gender, disability, and indigenous issues separately, missing opportunities to build understanding of intersectional experiences and integrated responses. Capacity building priorities should include intersectional analysis training for policy makers, disability inclusion competencies for health and education

professionals, and cultural sensitivity training that respects indigenous knowledge systems and communication styles.

#### **9.4. Data and Monitoring Systems**

Disaggregated data collection improvement requires systematic expansion to capture the full diversity of experiences within and across marginalized groups. Current data systems often provide aggregate statistics that mask significant variations in outcomes and fail to identify the most vulnerable populations. Data system reforms should mandate intersectional data collection that captures multiple identity dimensions simultaneously, establish regular survey modules that track discrimination experiences and barriers to inclusion, and create accessible data dissemination systems that enable community-based monitoring and advocacy.

Indicator development for intersectional analysis requires innovation beyond traditional approaches that examine single dimensions of inequality in isolation. Standard disaggregation by gender or disability status fails to capture the compound disadvantages experienced by women with disabilities, indigenous women, or other groups facing multiple forms of marginalization. Monitoring system improvements should develop composite indicators that measure intersectional outcomes, establish baseline data for all vulnerable subpopulations, and create early warning systems that identify emerging disparities before they become entrenched.

Community-based monitoring mechanisms require systematic support and integration into official monitoring systems to ensure that government data reflects lived experiences and community priorities. Communities possess essential knowledge about policy implementation challenges and outcomes that formal monitoring systems often miss. System reforms should establish community monitoring grants that support grassroots data collection, create feedback mechanisms that ensure community input influences policy adjustments, and develop participatory evaluation methods that recognize diverse forms of knowledge and communication.

Accountability systems require fundamental strengthening to ensure that data collection translates into policy improvements and resource adjustments. Current monitoring often produces reports that have limited impact on actual policy implementation or resource allocation decisions. Reform priorities should establish mandatory response requirements for monitoring findings, create public reporting systems that enable citizen oversight, and develop consequence mechanisms for agencies that fail to meet inclusion targets or respond adequately to identified problems.

### **10. Conclusion: Pathways to Inclusive Development**

This comprehensive analysis of GEDSI progress in the Philippines undertaken in this study reveals both significant achievements and persistent challenges that require urgent and coordinated responses across multiple levels of government and society. The evidence demonstrates that while the Philippines has established progressive policy frameworks and achieved notable improvements in several gender equality indicators, fundamental gaps in implementation, resource allocation, and intersectional understanding continue to limit progress toward truly inclusive development that leaves no one behind.

### *10.1. Key Findings and Insights*

The research reveals a fundamental paradox in Philippine GEDSI progress: substantial policy achievements coexist with persistent implementation gaps that limit the transformational potential of existing frameworks. Despite comprehensive legislation including the Magna Carta of Women, the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, marginalized groups continue to face significant barriers to full participation in economic, social, and political life. This implementation gap stems from multiple factors including inadequate resource allocation, weak enforcement mechanisms, limited institutional capacity, and the absence of systematic approaches to addressing intersectional inequalities.

Critical implementation deficits, exemplified by the lack of proper use of the GAD budget, represent perhaps the most urgent challenge facing Philippine GEDSI progress. The transformation of the five percent GAD budget allocation from a strategic development tool into a compliance exercise has undermined the potential for meaningful investment in gender equality. Evidence of widespread fund misuse, lack of accountability mechanisms, and institutional weakening of oversight bodies like the Philippine Commission on Women demonstrates that policy implementation failures can effectively neutralize even the most progressive legislative frameworks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the development landscape, pushing more Filipinos into poverty and creating new vulnerabilities for already marginalized groups. Women, persons with disabilities, and indigenous communities have faced disproportionate impacts from pandemic-related restrictions and economic disruptions. As such, they require targeted interventions that can improve their socio-economic and political participation, inclusion, and development.

Intersectional analysis emerges as a critical lens for understanding how multiple forms of marginalization interact to create unique patterns of disadvantage that traditional single-issue approaches fail to address effectively. Women with disabilities, indigenous women, and other groups facing multiple forms of discrimination experience compound disadvantages that existing policies, designed primarily around single identity categories, struggle to address comprehensively. The evidence demonstrates that effective GEDSI interventions must move beyond sector-specific approaches toward integrated strategies that recognize how gender, disability, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographic location intersect to shape individual and community experiences.

Regional disparities in GEDSI outcomes represent a critical challenge that the devolution of service delivery may exacerbate without adequate safeguards and capacity building investments. While increased fiscal transfers to Local Government Units offer opportunities for improved local accountability and culturally appropriate service delivery, varying LGU capacity threatens to create even greater inequalities in access to essential services. The analysis reveals that successful devolution requires substantial investments in local capacity building, standardized service delivery protocols, and monitoring systems that ensure equitable outcomes across different geographic contexts.

Data gaps and monitoring system limitations significantly constrain the ability to track progress, identify emerging challenges, and design evidence-based interventions that respond to diverse community needs and priorities. The absence of comprehensive data on discrimination experiences, limited disaggregation of existing surveys, and weak community-

based monitoring mechanisms create substantial blind spots in understanding GEDSI outcomes. These data limitations particularly affect the most marginalized groups, including women with disabilities and indigenous peoples, whose experiences remain largely invisible in official statistics and policy planning processes.

## *10.2. Strategic Recommendations*

Priority intervention areas emerging from this analysis require coordinated action across multiple policy domains, with particular emphasis on addressing implementation gaps that limit the effectiveness of existing frameworks. The evidence suggests that incremental reforms within current systems will prove insufficient to address the scale and complexity of GEDSI challenges. Instead, transformational changes are needed in legislative frameworks, institutional arrangements, resource allocation mechanisms, and monitoring systems to create enabling environments for inclusive development.

Implementation sequencing should prioritize foundational reforms that create enabling conditions for more specific interventions while ensuring that immediate needs of the most vulnerable populations receive urgent attention. Legislative harmonization and institutional capacity building represent critical first steps that will enhance the effectiveness of subsequent program interventions. Simultaneously, immediate investments in accessibility infrastructure, and community-based services can provide tangible improvements in lives and adaptation to shocks (like COVID-19) while longer-term systemic reforms take effect.

Resource mobilization strategies must move beyond traditional donor-recipient models toward innovative financing mechanisms that leverage domestic resources, private sector engagement, and international cooperation to create sustainable funding for inclusive development. The scale of investment required for meaningful GEDSI progress exceeds current public sector allocations and traditional development assistance flows. Strategic priorities include developing social impact bonds for disability inclusion, and establishing public-private partnerships that deliver both social and economic returns while respecting human rights and community priorities.

Partnership development requires fundamental restructuring of relationships between government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector actors, and communities to create collaborative governance systems that leverage diverse expertise and resources. Current coordination mechanisms often operate as information-sharing exercises rather than genuine collaboration platforms that pool resources and align strategies across different actors. Reform priorities should establish joint planning and implementation mechanisms, create shared accountability systems, and develop conflict resolution processes that enable productive collaboration despite different organizational cultures and priorities.

## *10.3. Future Research Directions*

Knowledge gap identification reveals critical areas where additional research is essential for informing policy development and program design, particularly regarding intersectional experiences and effective intervention strategies. Current research often examines gender, disability, and social inclusion issues separately, missing opportunities to understand how multiple forms of marginalization interact and compound each other. Priority research areas include longitudinal studies of intersectional outcomes, evaluation of integrated intervention

models, and participatory research that centers the voices and expertise of marginalized communities in knowledge production processes.

Methodological innovation needs include developing research approaches that can capture complex, dynamic relationships between different forms of inequality while respecting diverse cultural contexts and knowledge systems. Traditional survey methods and administrative data collection often fail to capture the nuanced experiences of marginalized groups or the effectiveness of community-based interventions. Innovation priorities include developing culturally appropriate data collection methods, creating participatory evaluation frameworks that recognize indigenous and community knowledge systems, and establishing real-time monitoring systems that enable rapid program adjustments based on community feedback.

Longitudinal study requirements emerge as essential for understanding how GEDSI outcomes change over time and how different interventions contribute to sustained improvements in inclusion and equality. Most current research provides snapshot views that fail to capture the dynamic nature of inequality or the long-term impacts of policy interventions. Research priorities include establishing cohort studies that track individual and community outcomes over extended periods, conducting policy implementation studies that follow programs from design through to long-term impact, and developing research partnerships that enable sustained collaboration between academic institutions, government agencies, and community organizations.

The pathway toward inclusive development in the Philippines requires fundamental recognition that gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion are not separate policy objectives but interconnected dimensions of human development that must be addressed through integrated, rights-based approaches that respect human dignity and promote social justice. This study provides evidence that such transformation is both necessary and achievable, but requires sustained political commitment, adequate resource allocation, and genuine partnership between government, civil society, and communities in designing and implementing solutions that leave no one behind.

The urgency of this agenda cannot be overstated: with less than five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the Philippines has a critical window of opportunity to demonstrate that inclusive development is possible through coordinated action that addresses the root causes of inequality while building more resilient and equitable systems for all.

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