

# India's Standing in the Global Gender Gap Index 2025: A Comprehensive Analytical Review

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**Abstract:** *The Global Gender Gap Index 2025 provides critical insights into the progress and setbacks countries experience in reducing gender disparities across four key dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. This study presents an in-depth analysis of India's performance in the 2025 edition, drawing on comparative data from the 2024 and 2025 reports. Adopting a descriptive-analytical approach, the paper evaluates India's sub-index scores, ranks, and year-on-year changes, supported by demographic and socio-economic indicators for contextual understanding. While India has demonstrated progress in educational enrolment and health outcomes, its overall rank remains low at 131 out of 148 countries. Persistent gaps in female labour force participation, wage equality, leadership roles, and political representation reflect deep-rooted structural and cultural barriers. The study underscores the urgent need for gender-sensitive policy reforms, inclusive economic strategies, and institutional interventions to accelerate progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality.*

**Keywords:** Gender Inequality, Economic Participation, Political Empowerment, Education, Health

## 1. Introduction

The Global Gender Gap Index was introduced in 2006 by the World Economic Forum (WEF) as part of its broader commitment to promoting gender equality and inclusive development worldwide. The background to the creation of this index lies in the growing global recognition that gender disparities—particularly in economic, educational, health, and political domains—limit not only individual freedom and opportunities but also national and global development.

Gender inequality has historically been deeply rooted in societal norms, economic frameworks, and political institutions. Although progress has been made in areas like education and healthcare across many nations, women and girls still encounter persistent structural barriers that hinder their full involvement in employment, leadership positions, and decision-making arenas. Addressing these challenges requires consistent monitoring and evidence-based policymaking.

Recognizing the need for a standardized, comparative tool, the WEF developed the Global Gender Gap Index to:

- Measure gender-based gaps rather than absolute levels of development.
- Track progress over time through annual updates.
- Highlight best practices and success stories that can inform policy reforms.

The index is structured around **four key dimensions**:

- 1) **Economic Participation and Opportunity** – covering labor force participation, wage equality, and leadership roles.
- 2) **Educational Attainment** – assessing access to basic and higher education.
- 3) **Health and Survival** – quantifying life expectancy and sex ratio.
- 4) **Political Empowerment** – tracking women's representation in political leadership.

Each dimension is essential in capturing the multi-faceted nature of gender inequality, and the combined score offers a holistic view of a country's progress toward gender parity. Over the years, the index has become a crucial instrument for governments, NGOs, scholars, and international agencies to assess gaps, monitor progress, and advocate for gender-inclusive policies globally.

In India, a country with significant socio-cultural diversity, this index serves as an indicator of progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality. In 2025, India ranked 131st out of 148 nations with a score of 0.644, showing marginal improvement from 2024. However, severe disparities in economic and political sectors continue to hinder inclusive development.

In this backdrop, the present study attempts a critically examine India's performance across the four sub-indices of the Global Gender Gap Index and to identify persistent disparities that hinder progress toward gender parity. The study employs a descriptive-analytical approaches, using secondary data from the Global Gender Gap Index 2025 report. Key indicators, scores, and rankings are analyzed in comparison with the previous year and global trends. Supporting demographic and socio-economic data provided in the report serve to contextualize the findings.

## Analysis of India's Global Gender Gap Index Performance (2025 vs 2024)

This section presents a detailed analysis of India's performance in the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, with a focus on the four core sub-indices: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. The analysis involves a comparative assessment of India's scores and rankings in 2025 with those of the previous year, as well as global and regional averages. This approach helps identify both areas of progress and persistent gender-based disparities. The data is drawn from the official Global Gender Gap Index 2025 report and is further contextualized using relevant demographic and socio-economic indicators to ensure

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analytical depth and accuracy. The table 1 depicts the India's Global Gender Gap Index Scores and Ranks (2025 vs 2024).

**Table 1:** India's Global Gender Gap Index Scores and Ranks (2025 vs 2024)

Category	2025 Score	2025 Rank	2024 Score	2024 Rank
Global Gender Gap Index	0.644	131 <sup>st</sup>	0.641	129 <sup>th</sup>
Economic Participation & Opportunity	0.407	144 <sup>th</sup>	0.398	142 <sup>nd</sup>
Educational Attainment	0.971	110 <sup>th</sup>	0.964	112 <sup>th</sup>
Health and Survival	0.954	143 <sup>rd</sup>	0.951	142 <sup>nd</sup>
Political Empowerment	0.245	69 <sup>th</sup>	0.251	65 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Global Gender Gap Index, 2024 and 2025

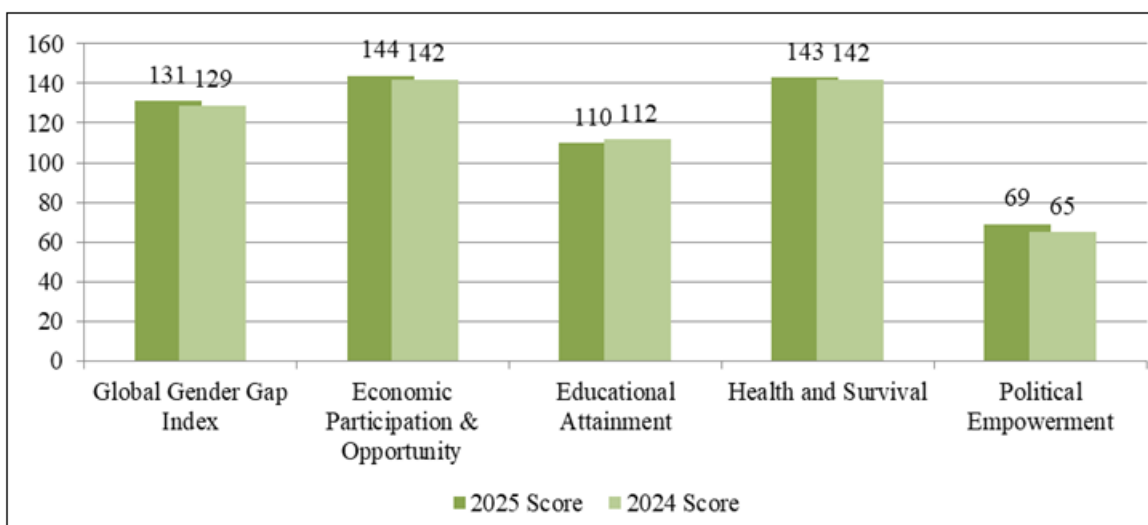
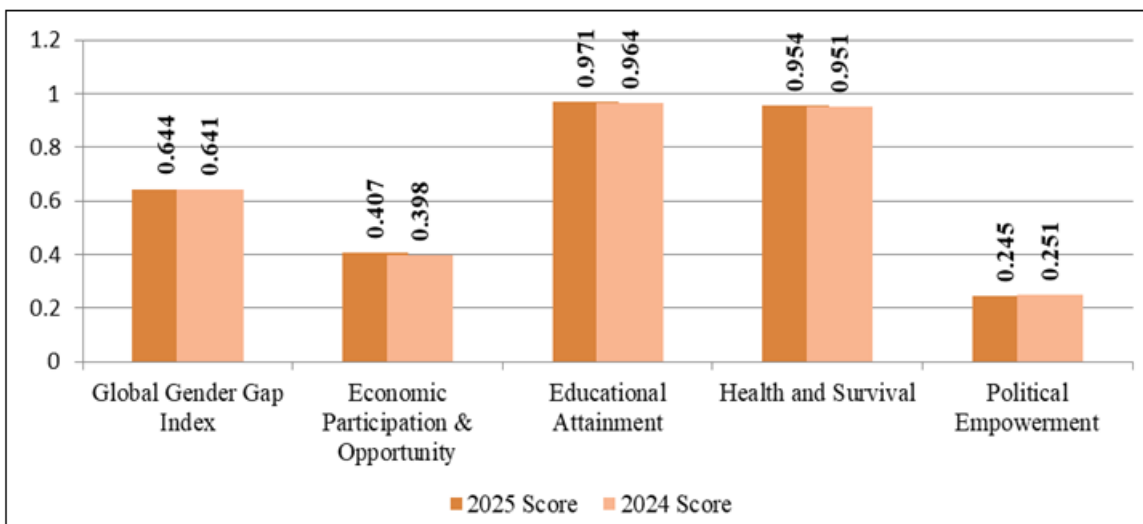


Table 1 presents a comparative overview of India's scores and rankings across the four sub-indices of the Global Gender Gap Index for the years 2025 and 2024. The overall score improved marginally from 0.641 in 2024 to 0.644 in 2025, yet India slipped in its overall rank from 129<sup>th</sup> to 131<sup>st</sup>, indicating that other countries have progressed at a faster pace.

In the sub-index of Economic Participation and Opportunity, India scored 0.407 in 2025, showing a slight improvement from 0.398 in 2024. However, its rank dropped to 144<sup>th</sup>, placing it among the bottom-most countries globally. This underscores persistent issues such as low female labor force participation, wage inequality, and underrepresentation in leadership roles. Educational Attainment remains a relative strength for India, with a score of 0.971 in 2025, up from

0.964 in 2024, and a rise in rank from 112<sup>th</sup> to 110<sup>th</sup>. While near-parity has been achieved in school enrolment rates, disparities remain in terms of access to higher education and dropout rates among rural and marginalized girls. In the Health and Survival category, India's score improved slightly to 0.954 in 2025 from 0.951 in 2024, yet it ranked 143<sup>rd</sup>, reflecting ongoing concerns over gender-biased sex selection and unequal access to healthcare for women and girls. Interestingly, in the Political Empowerment sub-index, India witnessed a marginal decline in score—from 0.251 in 2024 to 0.245 in 2025—along with a fall in rank from 65<sup>th</sup> to 69<sup>th</sup>. Despite constitutional provisions and local-level reservations, women's representation in national leadership and ministerial positions remains limited.

Overall, the analysis reveals that while there are incremental improvements in certain domains, particularly education and health, India continues to lag significantly in economic participation and political empowerment, which are critical for achieving true gender parity.

### Sub-Index-wise Analysis of India's Performance

To gain a deeper understanding of India's standing in the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, this section provides a sub-index-wise analysis across the four key dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. Table 2 to 5 present disaggregated indicators under each sub-index, highlighting India's scores and rankings in specific components. This approach allows for the identification of strengths, weaknesses, and emerging trends within each domain. Hence, Table 2 depicts the Economic Participation and Opportunity Indicators.

**Table 2: Economic Participation and Opportunity Indicators**

Indicator	Rank	Score	Gender Gap (F-M)
Labour-force participation rate (%)	136 <sup>th</sup>	0.459	-41.32
Wage equality for similar work (1–7 scale)	117 <sup>th</sup>	0.541	–
Estimated earned income (Intl. \$1000)	140 <sup>th</sup>	0.299	-9.71
Legislators, senior officials and managers	131 <sup>st</sup>	0.144	-74.84
Professional and technical workers (%)	119 <sup>th</sup>	0.494	-33.86

Source: Global Gender Gap Index, 2025

Table 2 highlights India's performance across key indicators under the Economic Participation and Opportunity sub-index of the Global Gender Gap Index 2025. Despite a slight overall improvement in the sub-index score from 2024, India continues to rank poorly, reflecting persistent gender-based economic disparities.

The labour force participation rate shows a significant gender gap, with India ranking 136<sup>th</sup> and scoring 0.459. The gender gap of -41.32 per cent clearly indicates that women's participation in the workforce remains far below that of men, driven by factors such as cultural norms, lack of childcare support, and informal work conditions.

In terms of wage equality for similar work, India ranks 117<sup>th</sup> with a moderate score of 0.541 on a scale of 1–7, suggesting on-going discrimination in compensation despite comparable qualifications and job roles.

The indicator for estimated earned income reveals a concerning gap, with India ranked 140<sup>th</sup> and scoring only 0.299, with a gender gap of -9.71 (in thousands of international dollars). This disparity is a result of lower-paying jobs, underemployment, and limited representation in high-income sectors for women.

A particularly severe gap is observed in the share of legislators, senior officials, and managers, where India ranks 131<sup>st</sup> with a score of just 0.144, indicating a gender gap of -74.84 per cent. These points to systemic underrepresentation

of women in decision-making and leadership positions across sectors.

While the representation of women among professional and technical workers is relatively better, India still ranks 119<sup>th</sup> with a score of 0.494 and a gender gap of -33.86 per cent, showing a need for stronger inclusion policies in skilled professions.

Overall, these indicators reflect deep-rooted structural and socio-cultural barriers that restrict women's economic participation in India. Bridging these gaps will require multi-dimensional policy efforts, including investments in skills training, workplace flexibility, equal pay legislation, leadership development for women, and social support systems such as affordable childcare and safe transport.

**Table 3: Educational Attainment Indicators**

Indicator	Rank	Score	Gender Gap (F-M)
Literacy rate (%)	114 <sup>th</sup>	0.852	-13.00
Enrolment in primary education	91 <sup>st</sup>	0.997	-0.28
Enrolment in secondary education	1 <sup>st</sup>	1.000	+1.17
Enrolment in tertiary education	1 <sup>st</sup>	1.000	+1.90

Source: Global Gender Gap Index, 2025

Table 3 highlights India's performance in the Educational Attainment sub-index, an area where the country shows comparatively strong results. With an overall score of 0.971 and improved rankings, India demonstrates near parity or even female advantage in most education-related indicators. However, some underlying gaps still persist.

The literacy rate, with a score of 0.852 and a rank of 114<sup>th</sup>, indicates that a gender gap of -13 per cent remains in basic literacy between men and women. While there has been steady improvement over the years due to government schemes like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, literacy among women—particularly in rural and marginalized communities—continues to lag behind.

India performs very well in terms of enrolment in primary and secondary education, ranking 91<sup>st</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> respectively. The scores—0.997 for primary and 1.000 for secondary—indicate near-complete gender parity in school enrolment. Interestingly, the positive gender gap (+1.17%) in secondary education suggests that a slightly higher proportion of girls than boys are now enrolled at this level, reflecting a cultural shift and growing awareness about girls' education.

Even more notable is India's performance in tertiary education, where it again ranks 1<sup>st</sup>, with a perfect score of 1.000 and a positive gender gap of +1.90 per cent. This indicates that more women than men are now enrolling in higher education. However, this progress is not evenly distributed, as enrolment levels vary widely across states, disciplines, and socio-economic groups.

Despite this strong quantitative performance, challenges remain regarding dropout rates, quality of education, digital access, and transitions to employment, particularly for

women. To convert educational gains into broader empowerment, India must focus on ensuring equitable learning outcomes, addressing socio-cultural barriers, and linking education with skill development and employment opportunities.

**Table 4:** Health and Survival Indicators

Indicator	Rank	Score
Sex ratio at birth (%)	139 <sup>th</sup>	0.930
Healthy life expectancy (Years)	121 <sup>st</sup>	1.006

Source: *Global Gender Gap Index, 2025*

Table 4 presents India's performance under the Health and Survival sub-index of the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, which includes two key indicators: sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy. Although India's overall score in this sub-index has marginally improved to 0.954, the country continues to rank 143<sup>rd</sup>, highlighting persistent gender-based health disparities.

The sex ratio at birth, with a score of 0.930 and a global rank of 139<sup>th</sup>, reflects on-going challenges related to son preference and gender-biased sex selection. Despite legislative measures such as the PCPNDT Act (Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act), deep-rooted socio-cultural norms and economic incentives continue to drive this imbalance, particularly in certain states. This skewed ratio indicates discrimination even before birth and remains a significant barrier to gender equality.

On the other hand, India performs relatively better in healthy life expectancy, with a score of 1.006 and a global rank of 121<sup>st</sup>, indicating near parity between women and men in terms of years lived in good health. This score suggests progress in public health infrastructure and access to healthcare services, especially maternal and child health programs. However, disparities remain across regions and socio-economic groups, particularly for women in rural and marginalized communities, who often face limited access to nutrition, reproductive health services, and preventive care. Overall, while India has achieved near gender parity in life expectancy, the adverse sex ratio at birth remains a critical concern. Addressing this will require continued enforcement of legal provisions, as well as community-level awareness campaigns to change gender norms, promote the value of girl children, and ensure equitable access to healthcare services for women and girls across all demographics.

**Table 5:** Political Empowerment Indicators

Indicator	Rank	Score	Gender Gap (F-M)
Women in Parliament (%)	124 <sup>th</sup>	0.160	-72.43
Women in Ministerial Positions (%)	138 <sup>th</sup>	0.059	-88.89
Years with Female/Male Head of State	11 <sup>th</sup>	0.407	-21.05

Source: *Global Gender Gap Index, 2024 and 2025*

Table 5 presents India's performance under the Political Empowerment sub-index of the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, which continues to reflect one of the widest gender gaps among the four dimensions. Although India ranks 69<sup>th</sup> in this sub-index, the overall score has slightly declined from

0.251 in 2024 to 0.245 in 2025, indicating stagnation in women's representation in political leadership.

The indicator for women in parliament shows a score of 0.160, with India ranked 124<sup>th</sup> globally and a gender gap of -72.43 per cent. Despite the increasing number of women MPs elected in recent years, their overall share remains disproportionately low compared to men. This imbalance underscores the need for systemic reforms, such as the long-pending Women's Reservation Bill at the national level, to ensure meaningful representation.

In terms of women in ministerial positions, the situation is even more critical. India ranks 138<sup>th</sup>, with a dismal score of 0.059 and a gender gap of -88.89 per cent, indicating that women are significantly underrepresented in executive decision-making roles within the government. This reflects structural barriers and gender biases in political party nominations, leadership grooming, and public perception of women leaders.

Interestingly, India performs better in the indicator measuring years with a female/male head of state, where it ranks 11<sup>th</sup> globally with a score of 0.407. This is largely attributed to the tenure of India's former female President and Prime Minister. However, this historical achievement does not translate into consistent or widespread representation of women in other political leadership roles.

Overall, the data reveal that while India has had prominent female political figures in the past, the broader landscape remains heavily male-dominated. To improve gender parity in political empowerment, India must adopt affirmative policies, build leadership capacity among women, and address cultural and institutional barriers that limit women's political participation and influence.

### Economic and Social Contextual Indicators

To complement the sub-index analysis of India's performance in the Global Gender Gap Index 2025, it is essential to understand the broader economic and social environment that influences gender equality outcomes. Tables 6 and 7 provide supporting indicators that reflect the macroeconomic context, demographic dynamics, and gender representation in economic leadership and education. These figures help contextualize the underlying challenges and opportunities in advancing gender parity, especially in workforce participation, entrepreneurship, and skill development.

**Table 6:** Economic and Social Indicators (2025)

Indicator	Value
GDP (US\$ Billion)	3,567.55
GDP per capita (PPP, Intl. \$)	9.16
Total Population (Millions)	1,438.07
Female Population (%)	48.41
Population Growth Rate (%)	0.88
Gender Wage Gap (%)	33.33
Women on Boards (%)	18.20
Female-Owned Firms (%)	1.80
Firms with Female Top Managers (%)	6.80

Source: *Global Gender Gap Index, 2025*



Table 6 presents key national-level indicators relevant to understanding India's gender gap challenges from an economic and social perspective. India's GDP of US\$ 3,567.55 billion and GDP per capita (PPP) of \$9.16k indicate its status as a fast-growing economy, yet this economic growth has not been equitably inclusive for women. With a female population share of 48.41%, women constitute nearly half of the population, yet their participation in economic leadership remains low. The gender wage gap of 33.33 per cent highlights significant income disparity between men and women, reflecting occupational segregation, wage discrimination, and unequal access to high-paying roles. Only 18.20% of Board Members are Women, and a mere 1.80% of businesses are female-owned, indicating systemic underrepresentation of women in entrepreneurship and corporate leadership. Similarly, just 6.80% of firms have female top managers, revealing the challenges women face in reaching executive positions. These statistics suggest that despite strong demographic potential, women's economic participation

remains highly constrained due to structural, cultural, and institutional factors. To address these gaps, policies must focus on enhancing financial inclusion, leadership training, mentorship programs, and gender-sensitive workplace reforms.

**Table 7: Education Field-wise Graduates (Percentage of Total)**

Field	Female	Male	Total
STEM	23.05	31.43	27.09
Arts & Humanities	31.15	26.97	29.14
Business, Administration & Law	17.98	20.60	19.24
Education	11.50	7.47	9.56
Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction	5.10	14.17	9.47
Health & Welfare	6.94	4.76	5.89
ICT (Information & Communication Technology)	3.28	4.56	3.90
Natural Science Maths & Stats	14.67	12.71	13.72
Social Sciences, Journalism, Info	8.68	7.29	8.01

Source: Global Gender Gap Index, 2025

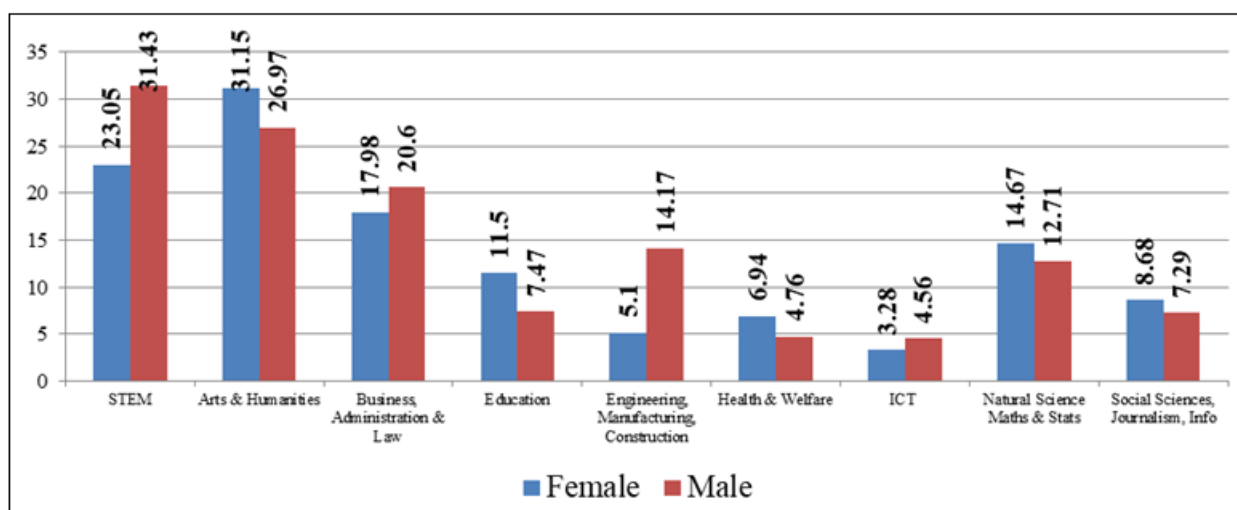


Table 7 provides insights into the distribution of female and male graduates across various academic disciplines. The data reveals distinct patterns of gendered educational choices, which have implications for career opportunities and future economic participation.

Women are overrepresented in Arts & Humanities (31.15%) and Education (11.50%), fields traditionally associated with lower income potential. In contrast, female representation in STEM (23.05%), Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction (5.10%), and ICT (3.28%) remains significantly lower than that of men, limiting their entry into high-growth and high-paying sectors.

Interestingly, women outpace men in Health & Welfare (6.94% vs. 4.76%) and are slightly ahead in Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics (14.67%), indicating growing interest and potential in certain science disciplines.

The data underscores the need to encourage gender diversity in STEM and technical education, through targeted scholarships, awareness campaigns, and gender-sensitive career counselling. Expanding women's presence in these

fields can play a crucial role in bridging the wage gap and enhancing women's long-term economic empowerment.

## 2. Summary and Conclusion

India's performance in the Global Gender Gap Index 2025 reflects a scenario of marginal improvement amid persistent structural inequalities. With an overall score of 0.644—slightly higher than the 2024 score of 0.641—India has dropped in global ranking from 129th to 131st, indicating that progress is not keeping pace with that of other nations. Among the four sub-indices, Economic Participation and Opportunity remains India's most challenging domain, with a low score of 0.407 and a dismal rank of 144th. Though there are minor improvements in labor force participation and wage equality, large disparities persist in earned income, leadership roles, and representation in formal economic sectors. In contrast, India has shown near gender parity in Educational Attainment, with a score of 0.971 and improvements in school and tertiary education enrolment. However, issues such as lower literacy rates among women and weak education-to-employment transitions remain concerns. In the Health and Survival sub-index, India ranks 143rd, largely due to a skewed sex ratio at birth, signaling

the continued influence of son preference and gender-biased cultural practices. While Political Empowerment remains India's relatively stronger area with a rank of 69th, the score declined slightly from 0.251 to 0.245, indicating stagnation in women's representation in parliament and ministerial positions.

To address these disparities and accelerate progress toward gender parity, a multi-pronged strategy is essential. Increasing women's workforce participation through inclusive hiring, childcare support, and entrepreneurship promotion is crucial. Legislative action, such as passing the Women's Reservation Bill, can help bolster female political representation. In the health sector, enforcing anti-discrimination laws and expanding access to reproductive and maternal health services is necessary. Bridging the gap between education and employment through STEM promotion, skill training, and industry linkages will further strengthen outcomes. Lastly, improving women's presence in corporate leadership requires policy mandates for board representation and regular gender audits.

In conclusion, while India has taken steps toward gender equality, progress remains uneven and insufficient. Comprehensive, data-driven, and gender-sensitive policy interventions—alongside societal transformation—are vital for ensuring inclusive growth and fulfilling the vision of Sustainable Development Goal 5. Achieving gender parity is not only a matter of justice but a prerequisite for India's socio-economic and democratic advancement.

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