

Notes on Women's Political Empowerment: A New Global Index, 1900-2012

By Aksel Sundstrom, Pamela Paxton, Yi-Ting Wand, Staffan I. Lindberg

Summary

- Women's civil liberties, civil society participation, and political participation
- Precise measurement with better inclusion of the Global South

Introduction

- Political Empowerment of women is important due to links between this and societal outcomes
- Women's representation in politics impacts democratization, corruption, etc.
- Sustainable Development Goal of the UN to increase representation and empowerment
- Developed by Varieties of Democracy Project from 1900 to 2012 for 173 countries
- Sub-Dimensions: civil liberties, civil society participation, political participation
- Bayesian Exploratory Factor Analysis (takes into account uncertainty)
 - Uses ratings of indicators from country experts

Theoretical Definition

- "Rights, resources, and voice"
- "A process of increasing capacity for women, leading to greater choice, agency, and participation in societal-decision making"

Choice

- To be denied a choice is to be disempowered
- Can women make key decisions? Especially concerning Human Rights Ideas
- Taking into account formal legal frameworks and also domestic/local factors
 - Household and familial standing and relationships
 - Freedom to move; Clausturation and disempowerment
- Control of resources and ownership of property
- Access to justice is crucial
 - Judicial system that holds women to the same regard
- To have a choice, "women must have basic freedom of movement, have property rights, be free from forced labor, and be treated as equals in the justice system."

Agency

- Women being change makers and active members
- Having the voice to speak freely, discuss politics, debate, freely express opinions
- "Civic agency" and participation in social orgs. which aids in growing and changing society
- Representation in journalism
- To have agency and gain goals women must have. "freedom of discussion and being able to participate in civil society organizations (CSO), as well as be represented in the ranks of journalists."

Participation

- Diversity of women brings new experiences and values to the political arena
- Women need a part in decision-making and legislation to be empowered

- To have participation, women must have a presence in political positions and an equal share of “distribution power”

Longitudinal Perspective

- Transition and change over time
- Some rights are universal today but not present years ago
- Must take into account context, time, and lack of rights

Prior Measures (Why this one)

- GDI and GEM are usual empowerment indicators replaced by GII and IHDI
- Time limitations, focus on laws and regulations, economic backgrounds
- More inequality over empowerment

Spatial and Temporal of existing

- Prior measurements biased towards industrialized countries with missing data for non-Western
 - Low-income countries are not truly represented or looked into

Other Issues

- Combination of absolute and relative situations
- Preventing the skewing of comparison to men
- Assessing women about men along with their full access
- Elite Bias of older indices
- Isolation of politics from economics or education allows a better understanding of how the areas work together or build off each other
- Past models do not measure uncertainty, error, bias

Constructing Indices

- Nine indicators from the V-Dem Project which is the largest dataset on democracy and related issues
- Expert Ratings from a wide range of people

Choice and Women's Civil Liberties Index

- Freedom of domestic movement for women
- Freedom from forced labor
- Property rights for women
- Access to justice for women

Agency and Women's Civil Society Participation Index

- Freedom of discussion for women
- CSO women's participation
- Female Journalists

Participation and Women's Political Participation Index

- Civil Liberties
- Civil society participation
- Political participation

Measuring over Century

- Women's suffrage was central in the beginning decades but became universal eventually

- Newly formed countries see the disadvantage of including suffrage in calculations
- 21st-century ideas like LGBT rights and health care are not taken into account
- Liberal Feminist Empowerment Ideas

Temporal and Spatial compared to previous

- Expansive and more inclusive of developing nations
- Covers large period with estimates

Sundström, A., Paxton, P., Wang, Y. T., & Lindberg, S. I. (2017). Women's political empowerment: A new global index, 1900–2012. *World Development*, 94, 321-335.