

#CSW70



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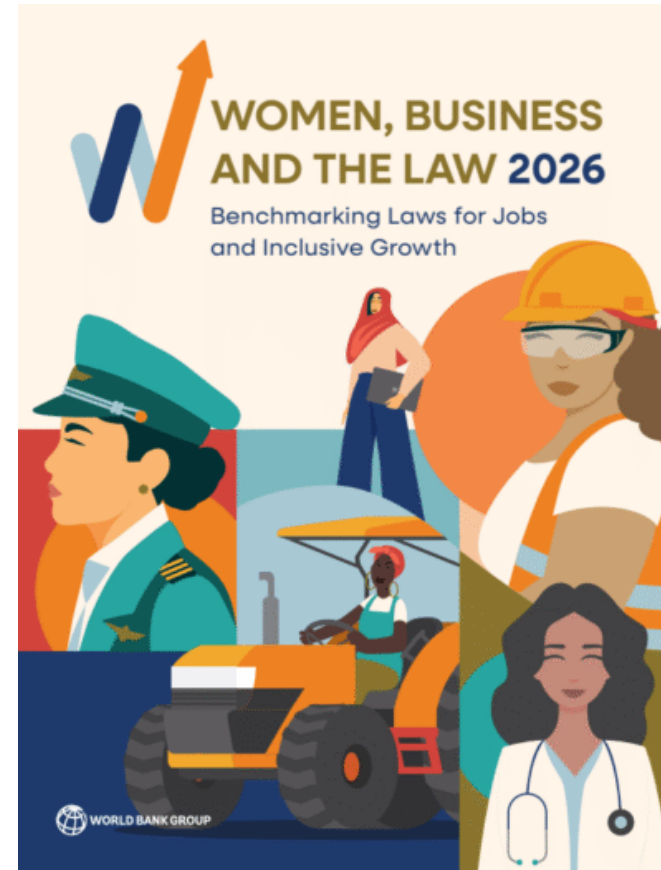
Turning To Meritocracy and Pluralism To Overcome Structural Barriers



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Legal Rights: Still Unequal

- Women hold **< 2/3** of men's legal rights
- Only **4%** of women live in economies approaching full legal equality
- **113** reforms in 68 countries
- **No country** has full legal equality

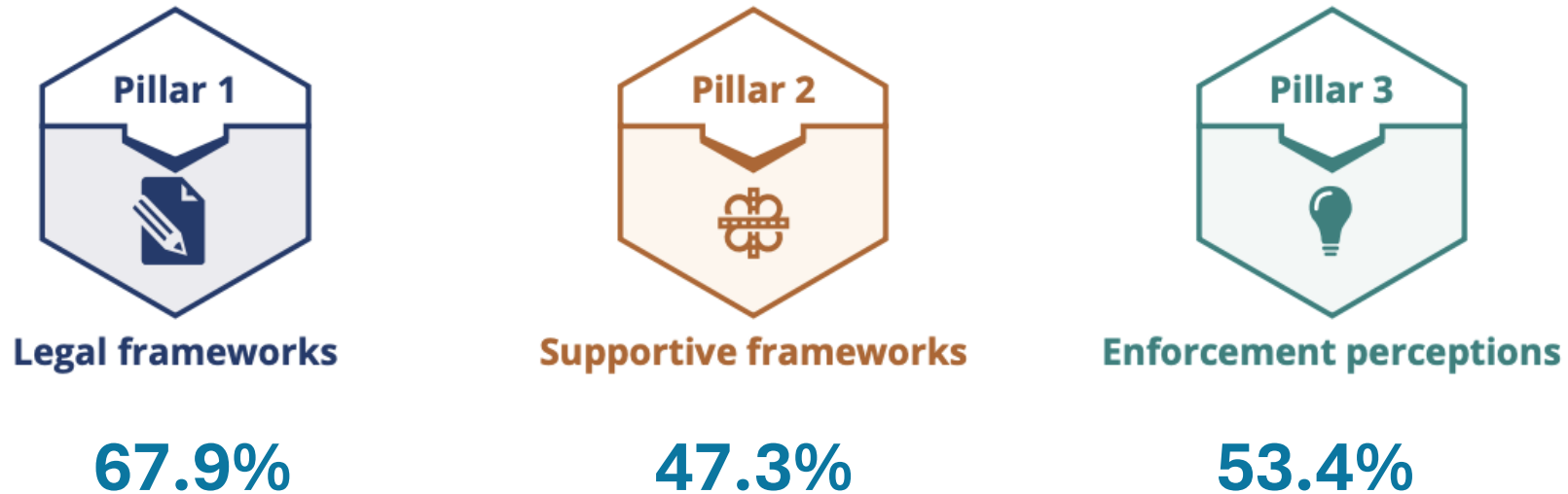


[Access WBL 2026 here](#)



The Implementation Gap

WBL assesses women's economic rights across three interconnected pillars and 10 topics:



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- A row of ten icons representing different economic rights topics. From left to right: a woman with a hand raised (Safety), a road sign (Mobility), a person wearing a hard hat (Work), a stack of money (Pay), two hands shaking (Marriage), a baby (Parenthood), a block with letters A, B, and C (Childcare), a person with a tree diagram (Entrepreneurship), a house (Assets), and a person with a cane (Pension).
- Safety
 - Mobility
 - Work
 - Pay
 - Marriage
 - Parenthood
 - Childcare
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Assets
 - Pension

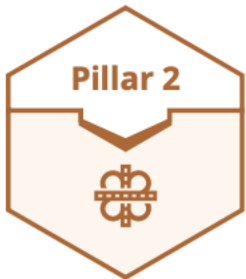


Safety



Legal frameworks

Only **one-third** of the laws needed to protect women from violence are in place globally.



Supportive frameworks

Even where laws exist, many economies **lack survivor-centered services** such as shelters, hotlines, legal aid, and trained police units.



Enforcement perceptions

Enforcement of violence-related laws is perceived as ineffective in roughly **80%** of economies, reflecting weak justice systems and low conviction rates.

Safety barriers directly reduce women's ability to work, travel to work, and remain in the labor force.



Childcare



Legal frameworks

In **44 economies**, childcare services for children under age three are completely unregulated—no standards for safety, staffing, or quality.

Childcare laws increase women's labor force participation by 2–4%
(World Bank, 2023)



Supportive frameworks

Globally, **less than one-third** of the policies needed to ensure affordable, quality childcare are in place. In **low-income economies**, only **~1%** of the needed systems exist.



Enforcement perceptions

Where laws exist, **implementation is partial or ineffective** – no inspections, no penalties, no monitoring.

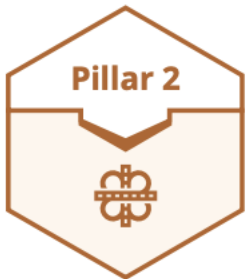


Entrepreneurship



Legal frameworks

Most economies allow women to start businesses legally, but **91 economies** lack protections against discrimination in access to credit



Supportive frameworks

Fewer than half of economies have the **policies, institutions, or financial supports** needed for women to use their legal rights.



Enforcement perceptions

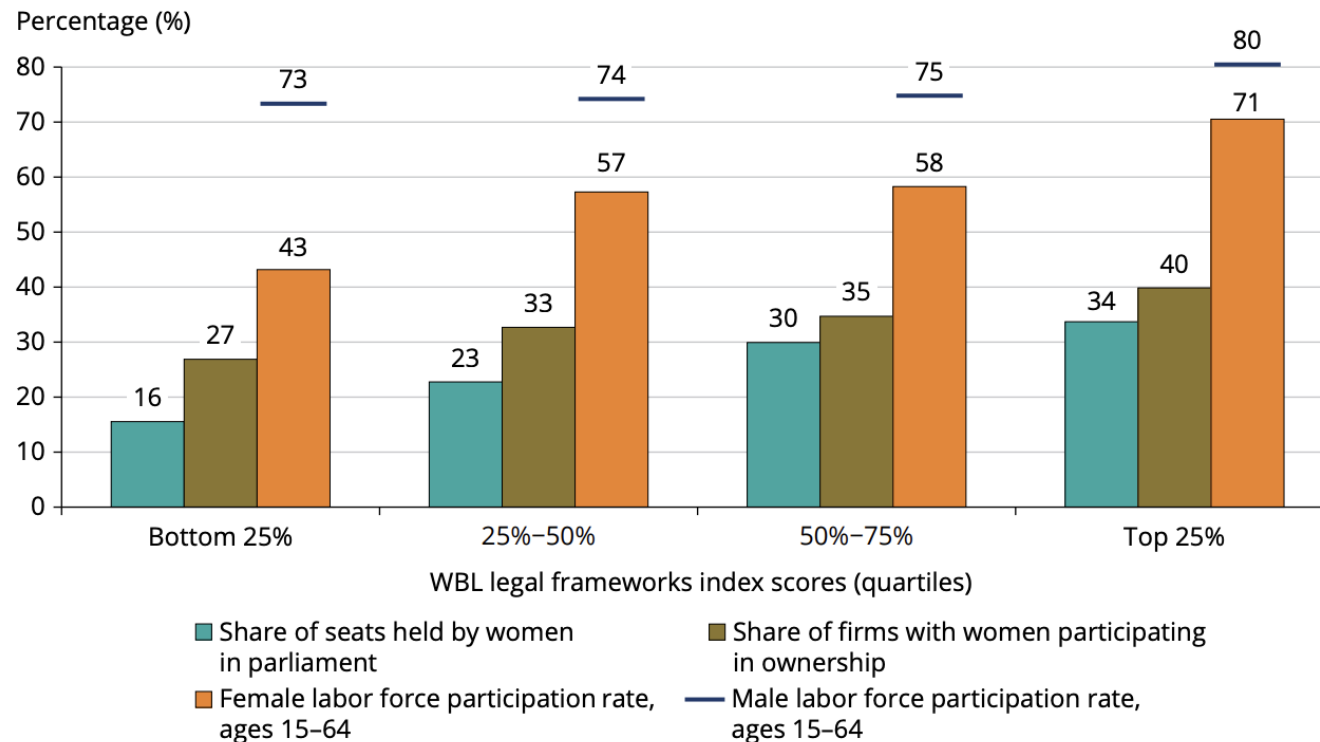
Laws supporting women's economic participation are enforced **only about 50% of the time.**

As a result, economies lose out on innovation, job creation, and sector diversification.



The Economic Opportunity

FIGURE ES.1 Equality laws are associated with more women working, owning businesses, and participating in politics, as well as a reduced gender gap in labor force participation



Closing gender gaps in employment and entrepreneurship could **raise global GDP by up to 20%**

Sources: *Women, Business and the Law* (WBL) database (2026), World Bank, <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl-data>; Enterprise Surveys database (2022–25), World Bank, <https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/en/data>; and World Development Indicators database (2022–24), World Bank, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.



The Business Case

- Principle 1  Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Principle 2  Treat all women and men fairly at work– respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
- Principle 3  Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Principle 4  Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Principle 5  Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Principle 6  Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Principle 7  Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

- ❖ Organizations with gender-diverse leadership teams are **25% more likely** to achieve higher profitability. (McKinsey, 2020)
- ❖ Employee turnover is costly, often ranging from **50% to 200%** of an individual’s yearly salary. (Gallup, 2019)
- ❖ While women own approximately **one-third of SMEs worldwide**, they receive **less than 1%** of procurement budgets, resulting in missed business opportunities. (WeConnect, 2017)

To learn more about the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs), established by the UN Global Compact and UN Women, visit: www.weps.org

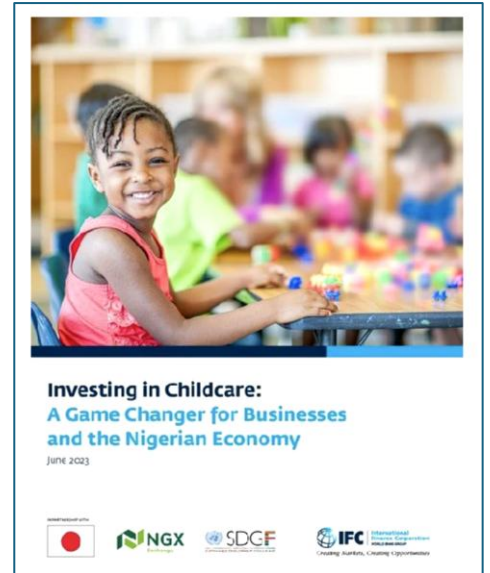


Partnering to Accelerate Progress: Spotlight on Childcare

Childcare is critical economic and social infrastructure and the primary responsibility of government.

Private-sector can complement public investments by:

- Providing employer-supported childcare.
- Offering additional family-friendly workplace policies and benefits.
- Providing insights on family needs and preferences to inform public policy and investment.
- Bringing needed innovation to childcare challenges, including women-led small businesses and tech start-ups.
- Financing solutions to support growth and sustainability of the childcare sector.



Access IFC's childcare publications [here](#)



Thank You!

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