

How the other half lives

Mediocre access to health, education and job opportunities but significant political empowerment marks the pattern of women's lives in the subcontinent.

The fifth annual gender gap index of the World Economic Forum (WEF) finds India occupying the 101st position among 136 countries, way behind Bangladesh at 75 though ahead of Pakistan at 135. The index bases its rankings on its findings regarding how women fare in four areas: health, access to education, economic participation, and political engagement.

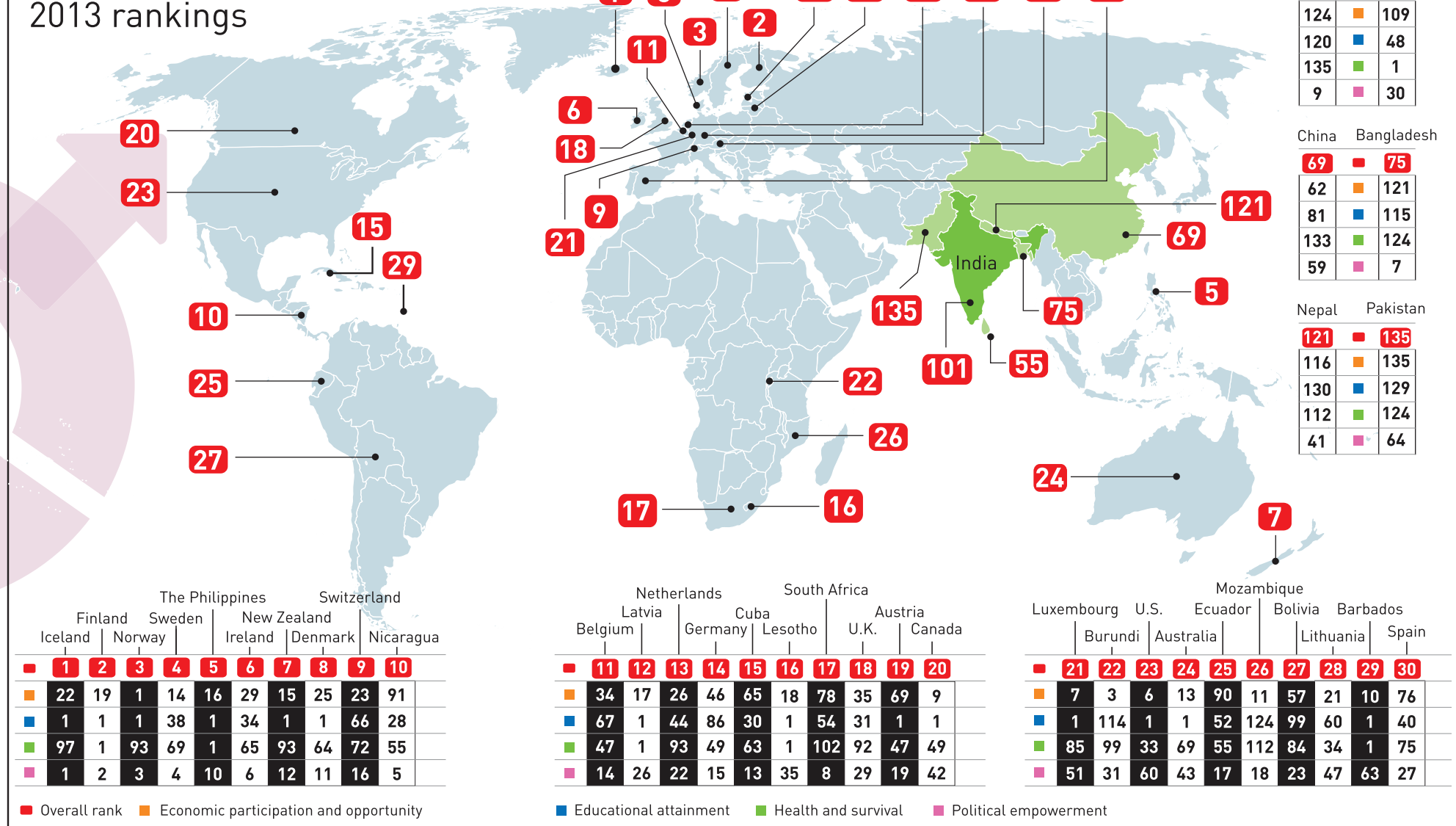
and opportunity, 115 in educational attainment, 124 in health and survival and 7 in political empowerment. Pakistan, which in its overall ranking is ahead only of Yemen, has 135 in economic participation and opportunity, 129 in educational attainment, 124 in health and survival and 64 in political empowerment. Iceland tops the ranking chart. Not surprisingly, the Scandinavian nations take up most of the top 10 positions. But there are a few surprises, too, with the Philippines (5), Nicaragua (10) and Cuba (15) far outstripping Britain (18) and the U.S. (23).



In each of these categories, too, every nation is accorded a ranking, apart from the overall one. India gets an unenviable one of 124 in economic participation and opportunity, 120 in educational attainment, a worrying 135 in health and survival, and a rather remarkable 9 in political empowerment. In comparison, Bangladesh has 121 in economic participation



Gender gap index 2013 rankings



The Middle East (West Asia) and North Africa have closed about 59 per cent of their gender gap. Asia and the Pacific, despite poor showings by nations with respect to women's access to health and education, lead the subindexes for women's political empowerment.

Region	Economic participation & opportunity (score by region)
North America	0.82
Europe and Central Asia	0.69
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.69
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.62
Asia and the Pacific	0.56
West Asia and North Africa	0.4

Region	Educational attainment
North America	1
Europe and Central Asia	0.99
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.99
Asia and the Pacific	0.92
West Asia and North Africa	0.91
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.84

Region	Health & survival
North America	0.98
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.98
Europe and Central Asia	0.97
West Asia and North Africa	0.97
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.97
Asia and the Pacific	0.95

Region	Political empowerment
Europe and Central Asia	0.26
Asia and the Pacific	0.24
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.19
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.17
North America	0.16
West Asia and North Africa	0.07