



WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW

FAQ – WBL 2025

Methodology Workshops

1. Can you please provide an example of WBL work affecting women in the energy sector?

Women, Business and the Law provides data and analysis that help shape laws and policies to improve women's economic participation, including in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as energy. In 77 out of 190 economies covered by WBL, legal restrictions still prevent women from working in certain jobs, limiting their access to better paying career opportunities. In 18 of these economies, women are specifically prohibited from working in the energy sector.

WBL data has been instrumental in supporting World Bank operational teams and other stakeholders to identify legal barriers and advocate for reforms that expand women's access to the labor market. One illustrative case is from Azerbaijan, where a World Bank Development Policy Operation used WBL data to identify over 600 legal restrictions that limited women's work across various sectors and occupations, including the energy sector. Drawing on this evidence, the World Bank's operational team worked with the government to support the reform of the Labor Code, repealing these discriminatory provisions and ultimately creating new job opportunities for women.

This case highlights how *Women, Business and the Law* data can be instrumental in informing policy dialogues and legal reforms that have a tangible impact on women's lives. Finally, WBL's insights across all indicators, not just the ones related to job restrictions, are relevant for identifying barriers and enablers for women economic participation in the energy sector and beyond.

2. Why is allowing women to work in dangerous jobs in the same way as men good for women, given potential health and safety risks, especially for pregnant or nursing women?

Women, Business and the Law does not consider legal provisions that prohibit pregnant or nursing women from working in specific jobs as labor market restrictions. The methodology is designed to assess laws that apply to women more broadly and permanently, rather than those tied to temporary conditions such as pregnancy or nursing. Under the project's parameters, the legal analysis focuses on women who are not pregnant or nursing at the time of assessment.

The rationale is grounded in both international standards and empirical research, which consistently show that removing broad-based job restrictions can significantly expand economic opportunities for women. For more information, please refer to pages 96 and 101 of the [Methodology Handbook](#).

In recent years, the global focus has shifted from prohibiting women from working in specific jobs toward ensuring gender-sensitive occupational safety and health (OSH) measures for all workers. For example, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has abrogated conventions such as the Night Work (Women) Conventions No. 4 and No. 41, which previously restricted women's participation in night shifts in industrial settings. The current international trend favors inclusive OSH policies that protect all workers—regardless of gender—while removing legal barriers that prevent women from accessing the full range of employment opportunities.

3. Does your methodology consider cases where the law guarantees and public authorities enforce equal job opportunities and pay across genders, but due to other factors, women avoid certain occupations, resulting in sectoral gender segregation? How is this accounted for when assessing gender pay disparities, especially when the problem remains evident despite the existence of a supportive legal frameworks?

The Supportive Frameworks pillar of the Pay topic recognizes that legal protections alone are not sufficient to overcome occupational segregation and achieve equal pay. While laws are foundational, policy instruments are essential to ensure effective implementation and to address deeper, structural barriers that limit women's ability to enjoy equal economic opportunities.

This pillar assesses a range of government-led initiatives aimed at promoting women's participation in high-paying sectors, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). For instance, indicator II.4.4 measures whether governments have adopted initiatives to incentivize women to work in STEM—acknowledging that women's underrepresentation in these fields is not only due to legal restrictions but also to social norms, educational gaps, and workplace culture. Evidence shows that fewer women pursue advanced degrees in STEM compared to men, highlighting the need for proactive policies.

In addition, indicator II.4.1 in this pillar assesses the availability of sex-disaggregated employment and wage data across sectors, as this information is critical for designing, implementing, and monitoring effective policies. Indicator II.4.2 examines pay transparency measures and enforcement mechanisms—such as mandatory employer pay gap reporting—that can empower women to identify and challenge unequal pay practices. Lastly, indicator II.4.3 assesses the existence of gender-sensitive occupational safety and health (OSH) policies that account for reproductive health risks and promote equal access to safe work environments.

Overall, the Pay Supportive Frameworks pillar addresses barriers beyond the law—such as social norms, lack of information and awareness, and occupational health and safety concerns—that can hinder the realization of equal pay and exacerbate occupational segregation.

4. If sex-disaggregated data on employment rates by economic sector or on salaries is published by an NGO or international organization, rather than the government, would this be counted under WBL?

Women, Business and the Law considers sex-disaggregated data published by a non-governmental or international organization only if there is clear evidence of government involvement in the collection and/or dissemination of the data. This may include, for example, publication on an official government website or visible government sponsorship—such as the presence of a government logo on the report. In the absence of such involvement, data solely produced and published by private sector or international entities is not taken into account in the assessment.

5. If a company in an economy has an initiative in place, such as a mentorship program, to retain women in STEM positions at the company, would WBL count this initiative?

Women, Business and the Law only assesses government-led initiatives in its assessment of Supportive Frameworks. Accordingly, initiatives implemented solely by private sector actors without any form of government involvement are not considered. However, an initiative may be taken into account if it is part of a formal public-private partnership in which the government plays an active role. Such involvement may include, for example, financial support, joint implementation, or official endorsement of the program. In these cases, the initiative is regarded as a reflection of governmental engagement in promoting women's participation, retention, and advancement in STEM fields.