

Published on *The Data Blog* (<http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata>)

[Home](#) > Many around the world worry about inequality, especially women

---

## Many around the world worry about inequality, especially women



Submitted by Jing Guo On Thu, 09/28/2017

In recent decades, [income inequality](#) <sup>[1]</sup> has risen in most of the developed world and many developing countries. There are [plenty of reasons](#) <sup>[2]</sup> to be worried about income inequality, as it often leads to unequal life opportunities, exacerbates disparities in health and life expectancy, and jeopardizes social unity.

While most of research work on inequality tends to focus on the poor, [a recent World Bank Group survey](#) <sup>[3]</sup> set out to explore how the opinion leaders—who are often economically better-off—perceive the growing gap between the rich and the poor.

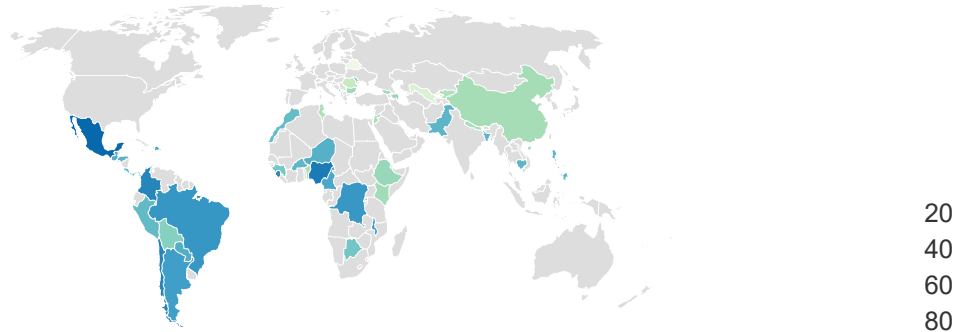
The survey interviewed more than 10,000 key opinion leaders<sup>[1]</sup> in fifty-two developing countries to find out 1) how concerned they are about income inequality, and 2) whether they perceived a link between equality of opportunity and poverty reduction.

Let's take a look at the key findings.

### Income inequality

The survey data show that majorities of opinion leaders in all but two countries (Uzbekistan and Belarus) perceived the gap between the rich and the poor as “a very big” or “moderately big problem” in their countries.

## Percentage of opinion leaders saying income gap is a very big problem in their country



*Question: Do you think the gap between the rich and the poor is a very big problem, a moderately big problem, a small problem or not a problem at all in \_\_\_\_\_?*

While a median of 55% worldwide said that the income gap is “a very big problem,” opinion leaders in Latin American countries are most concerned about the problem (with a median of 66%). Within this region, the sentiment was the strongest in Mexico (89%) and Colombia (80%). By contrast, respondents in East Europe and Central Asia were overall least likely to see income inequality as a major issue in their societies.

Globally, women are significantly<sup>[2]</sup> more worried about economic inequality than men. Sixty percent of female respondents vs. 57% of male respondents believed that the income gap is “a very big problem.”

At a country level, for instance, in Uzbekistan, where people mostly reported unconcerned about inequality, women were almost five times more likely (23%) than men (5%) to say that the gap between the rich and the poor is a very severe issue.

## Top 25 countries where income gap is seen as a very big or moderately big problem by opinion leaders in %

|                    | A very big problem | A moderately big problem | A small problem | Not a problem at all | Don't know |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------|
| Mexico             | 89                 |                          |                 |                      | 9 2        |
| Nigeria            | 83                 |                          |                 |                      | 12 3       |
| Chile              | 80                 |                          |                 |                      | 17 2       |
| Colombia           | 80                 |                          |                 |                      | 16 2       |
| Sierra Leone       | 79                 |                          |                 |                      | 17 3       |
| Brazil             | 75                 |                          |                 | 21                   | 2          |
| Malawi             | 75                 |                          |                 | 21                   | 2          |
| Argentina          | 72                 |                          |                 | 24                   |            |
| Dominican Republic | 72                 |                          |                 | 24                   | 3          |
| Cameroon           | 69                 |                          |                 | 22                   | 5 2        |
| Paraguay           | 66                 |                          |                 | 29                   | 3          |
| Guatemala          | 66                 |                          |                 | 25                   | 4 4        |
| Honduras           | 64                 |                          |                 | 29                   | 4 2        |
| Bangladesh         | 63                 |                          |                 | 28                   | 6          |
| Pakistan           | 63                 |                          |                 | 33                   | 3          |
| Cambodia           | 63                 |                          |                 | 34                   |            |
| Philippines        | 63                 |                          |                 | 35                   | 2          |
| Burkina Faso       | 63                 |                          |                 | 30                   | 4 3        |
| Jamaica            | 62                 |                          |                 | 30                   | 8          |
| Peru               | 61                 |                          |                 | 32                   | 5 2        |
| Costa Rica         | 60                 |                          |                 | 34                   | 3 2        |
| Morocco            | 60                 |                          |                 | 35                   | 2 2        |
| Panama             | 54                 |                          |                 | 40                   | 4 3        |
| Mauritius          | 52                 |                          |                 | 42                   | 5          |
| China              | 37                 |                          | 54              |                      | 8          |

Source: [World Bank Group Country Opinion Survey](#)

## Equality of opportunity and poverty reduction

According to the [United Nations](#) [4], income inequality cannot be effectively tackled unless the underlying inequality of opportunities is addressed. [Previous research](#) [5] has also suggested that high levels of inequality can limit the effectiveness of growth in reducing poverty.

How important a role do the opinion leaders believe equality of opportunity plays in reducing poverty?

The survey findings indicate that 13% of the respondents globally picked equality of opportunity as a top contributor to poverty reduction among thirty different development areas. Among the forty countries surveyed in 2016, Malaysia (followed by Panama) topped the list with nearly a quarter of the respondents considering equality as an important driver of poverty alleviation.

Compared to men (12%), women (16%) were significantly more likely to see equality of opportunity as critical in reducing poverty.

## Percentage of opinion leaders who say equality of opportunity contributes to poverty reduction

|            |      |
|------------|------|
| Malaysia   | 22.7 |
| Panama     | 16.9 |
| Armenia    | 16.2 |
| Argentina  | 15.9 |
| Brazil     | 14.6 |
| Peru       | 9.6  |
| Costa Rica | 9.1  |
| Guatemala  | 8.7  |
| Mexico     | 8.6  |
| Bolivia    | 7.1  |

Only top 10 countries surveyed in 2016 with the highest percentages are shown.

Source: [World Bank Group Country Opinion Survey](#)

---

[1] Survey respondents were chosen from government, parliament, private sector, civil society, media, and academia. To learn more about the Country Opinion Survey, please go to:

<http://countrysurveys.worldbank.org/> [3]

[2] Statistically significant difference

- Tags:
- [Country Opinion Survey](#) [6]
- [poverty reduction](#) [7]
- [Equal opportunity](#) [8]
- [Income Inequality](#) [9]
- [The World Region](#) [10]

---

**Source URL (retrieved on 09/13/2018 - 03:24):** [http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/many-around-world-worry-about-inequality-especially-women?CID=POV\\_TT\\_Poverty\\_EN\\_EXT](http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/many-around-world-worry-about-inequality-especially-women?CID=POV_TT_Poverty_EN_EXT)

### Links:

[1] [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/05/16/report-income-inequality-rising-in-most-developed-countries/?utm\\_term=.a300ce9dcb64](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/05/16/report-income-inequality-rising-in-most-developed-countries/?utm_term=.a300ce9dcb64)

[2] <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/poverty-and-shared-prosperity>

[3] <http://countrysurveys.worldbank.org/>

[4] <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/>

[5] <https://www.oecd.org/dev/pgd/44773119.pdf>

[6] <http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/taxonomy/term/13258>

[7] <http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/taxonomy/term/11905>

[8] <http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/category/tags/equal-opportunity>

[9] <http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/category/tags/income-inequality>

[10] <http://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/category/regions/world-region>