

DATA AT A GLANCE

## ASEAN’s Sex Differences in Education Versus Labor

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Having formal education and paid work in modern societies are indispensable goals for adult persons (i.e., those aged 15 and older). Age-old social structures, however, such as sex, are constraining many individuals from aiming, let alone attaining, the said goals. Sex does not only neatly categorize individuals into males and females, but also bestows them (males) with, or deprives them (females) of, the attendant rights, privileges, and resources.

Throughout the ASEAN where equality between the sexes is fostered as a national development goal, it would be interesting to discover how far member-countries have gone in terms of closing the gaps in the number of their males and females who have completed secondary education and participated in the labor force. What is the prevailing extent of sex-based differences in these respects? Table 1 presents the computed results from 10 ASEAN member-countries.

Data reveal that, across the ASEAN, there are more males than females with secondary education and who are in the labor force. However, this difference is narrower in education (range: -7.13%-12.9%) than in the labor force (range: -0.68%-32.9%). Considerable sex differences (>10.0%) in education are found in three countries (i.e., Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam), while parallel differences in the labor force are found in seven countries. In a few countries, females outnumber males in education (i.e., in Myanmar and the Philippines) or labor (i.e., in Laos). The ASEAN appears to have succeeded more in bridging the sex gaps in education than in labor. Structural, institutional, and sociocultural influences could be some potential explanations for these gaps.

**Table 1**

*ASEAN’s Percentages of Males and Females Aged 15 and Older, With At Least Secondary Education and in the Labor Force, and Sex Differences*

Country	Education			Labor		
	Male	Female	Difference	Male	Female	Difference
Brunei	69.6	67.7	1.90	75.3	51.0	24.4
Cambodia	26.1	13.2	12.9	86.7	75.5	11.2
Indonesia	51.7	42.9	8.81	83.9	50.9	32.9
Laos	42.8	30.4	12.4	77.0	77.7	-0.68
Malaysia	79.1	75.4	3.65	77.6	49.3	28.3
Myanmar	20.0	27.1	-7.13	81.1	75.1	5.93
Philippines	70.3	72.8	-2.57	78.8	50.5	28.3
Thailand	45.8	40.9	4.89	80.2	62.9	17.2
Singapore	81.9	75.5	6.39	76.4	58.2	18.2
Vietnam	76.7	64.0	12.8	83.2	73.8	9.39

Source: United Nations Development Program (2016)

### Reference

United Nations Development Program. (2016). *Human development index*. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>