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TRACKING GENDER DISPARITIES IN GLOBAL POVERTY: 2014-2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The challenge of unpacking gender parity in global poverty data

Globally, more than 400 million women live¹ in poverty², compared to 390 million men. This means that 11.4 percent of all women and 10.9 percent of all men worldwide live in extreme poverty. At the higher poverty line of \$8.30 a day, about half of all women and men were poor in 2024. Overall, poverty rates are similar for women and men because most countries measure welfare at the household rather than at the individual level.³ Since men and women are roughly equal in number, the share of poor men and women is nearly identical by construction. Still, a slight but persistent female disadvantage emerges in the Middle-East, North-Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAAP), South Asia (SAR), and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) regions.

Table 1: Poverty rates and millions of poor by region, 2023

	Poverty rate at \$3.00		Millions of poor	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total	11.4%	10.9%	401.3	388.9
Regions				
EAP	2.1%	2.0%	21.7	21.4
ECA	0.7%	0.7%	1.6	1.6
LAC	4.6%	4.5%	14.5	13.6
MENAAP	11.6%	11.2%	35.5	35.1
OHI	0.3%	0.3%	0.5	0.5
SAR	4.0%	3.6%	32.3	31.2
SSA	46.4%	45.1%	295.2	285.4

Source: GMD data from 2024, own elaboration.

Note: 153 countries with data available. Regions: East Asia and the Pacific (EAP), Europe and Central Asia (ECA), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Middle-East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan (MENAAP), OHI (Other High Income) South Asia (SAR), Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Regional averages are weighted by country population.

For most countries, data do not allow us to observe how resources are distributed within households⁴, which severely constrains our ability to analyze poverty for men and women. Most poverty measures rely on the assumption of equal sharing among household members. However, this assumption rarely holds. A growing body of literature shows that the allocation of resources within families is shaped by factors such as bargaining power, social norms, and individual characteristics such as education or earning

¹ Belong to households living on less than \$3 a day (2021 PPP) in per capita terms.

² The World Bank uses different poverty lines to define poverty for various income levels: Extreme Poverty: \$3.00 per day (2021 PPP) for low-income countries, Poverty in Lower-Middle-Income Countries: \$4.20 per day (2021 PPP), Poverty in Upper-Middle-Income Countries: \$8.30 per day (2021 PPP)

³ The World Bank methodology for poverty measurement does not apply any equivalence factors to different household members, instead taking household consumption or income and dividing it equally among household members (Chen and Ravallion, 2010). This assumes all resources are equally shared among members, which has been disputed when data allow for individual level welfare measurement (Batana, Bussolo and Cockburn, 2013). However, there is no consensus regarding specific intra-household distributional parameters that hold at a global scale.

⁴ Malghan, D. and H. Swaminathan (2021)

potential. As a result, household-level poverty may underestimate women's deprivation and obscure gender gaps.

Traditional poverty metrics often rely on household headship—labeling households as “female-headed” or “male-headed”—to assess poverty for men and women. When looking at poverty by headship, female-headed households show a lower poverty rate. The analysis highlights a key trend: poverty rates in male-headed households are falling at twice the speed of those in female-headed households. However, this approach misses the majority of poor women, who live in male-headed households, and assumes equal resource sharing within households, which research shows is rarely the case.

The analysis in this note focuses on two compositions: demographic and economic. Following Muñoz-Boudet et al. (2018) and Muñoz-Boudet et al. (2021), we first classify households according to their demographic composition, that is the age and sex of adult members and the presence of minors. Adults are defined as individuals between the ages of 18 and 64, the elderly as those aged 65 or older, and minors as those younger than 18. Based on this, six categories are distinguished: one adult female with minors; two adults with minors; multiple adults with minors; only senior adults with minors; adults without minors; and only seniors (65+) without minors. The most common setup across regions is households with multiple adults, followed by two adults, and a smaller percentage with single adults. The population living in households with children ranges between 54 percent in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) to 90 percent in SSA.

Then we classify them according to an economic composition, grouping households by the number of earners and the presence of dependents. Earners are defined as individuals aged 15 or older who report being employed, either as self-employed, employers, wage earners, or non-remunerated workers. Dependents include minors, elderly, and working-age adults (15–64) who are not engaged in economic activity. Using this classification, eight categories are identified: single earner with minors; single earner without minors; single earner with dependents and minors; single earner with dependents without minors; multiple earners with minors; multiple earners without minors; multiple earners without minors; no earners with minors; and no earners without minors.

Message 1: Women of reproductive age continue to experience higher poverty than their male counterparts

When analyzing poverty across different stages of life, distinct gender patterns emerge. Women face higher poverty rates at specific ages, particularly during childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. In 2014, girls and young women were consistently 2-3 percentage points more likely to be poor than their male peers, with the gap being most pronounced between the ages of 15 and 34. Ten years later these gaps have narrowed but are still present.

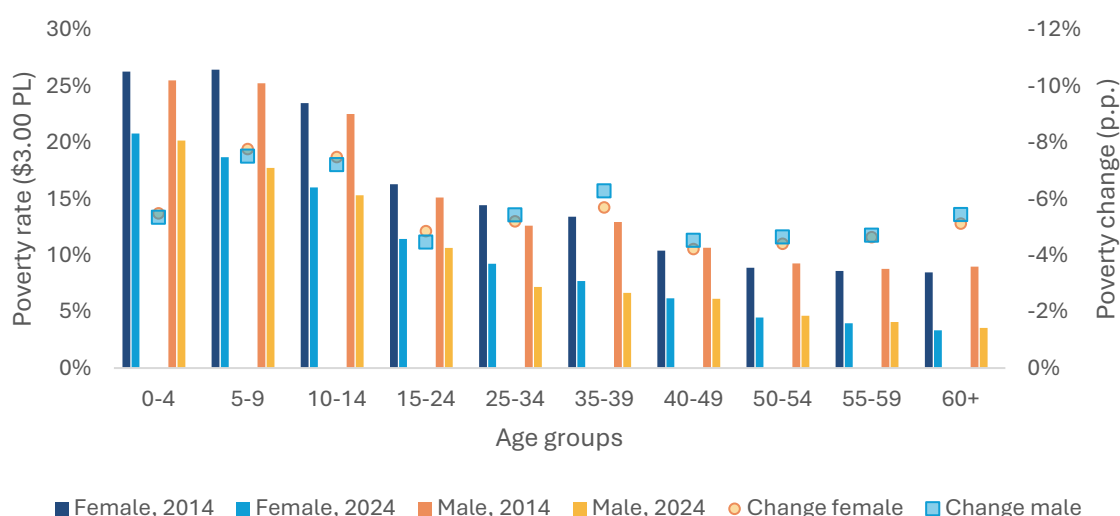
Although poverty rates have declined for both men and women over the past decade, women continue to bear a disproportionate burden during particular life stages. By 2024, the gender gap in poverty had narrowed significantly but women remained more likely to be poor up to ages 35–39. The largest difference persisted between ages 15 and 34, where women's poverty rates exceeded men's by less than 2 percentage points. These trends indicate progress but also highlight persisting vulnerabilities linked to limited access to

education, early marriage, caregiving responsibilities, and labor market disadvantages (Munoz-Boudet et al 2018 and 2021; Malghan and Swaminathan 2021).

As shown in Figure 1, poverty reduction has been particularly strong among children and adolescents, with declines of 5 to 8 percentage points for those aged 0–14, compared to 4–6 points for adults. Notably, girls and young women experienced slightly greater gains than boys and young men, whereas adult men saw marginally greater improvement than adult women.

In all regions, young adult women face the highest risk of poverty relative to men. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, women aged 25–34 have the highest likelihood to be extreme poor than men (42, 2,7 and 29 percent, respectively), driven by constrained economic opportunities, caregiving responsibilities, and labor market disadvantages. In South Asia, girls and young women aged 10–24 are 26 percent more likely to experience extreme poverty than boys and young men, reflecting challenges ranging from son preference to unequal access to education and early marriage.

Figure 1. Poverty rate (at \$3.00 PL) by sex and age group in 2014 vs 2024



Source: Own elaboration based on GMD 2014 and 2024 lineup

Note: 110 countries with data for both years

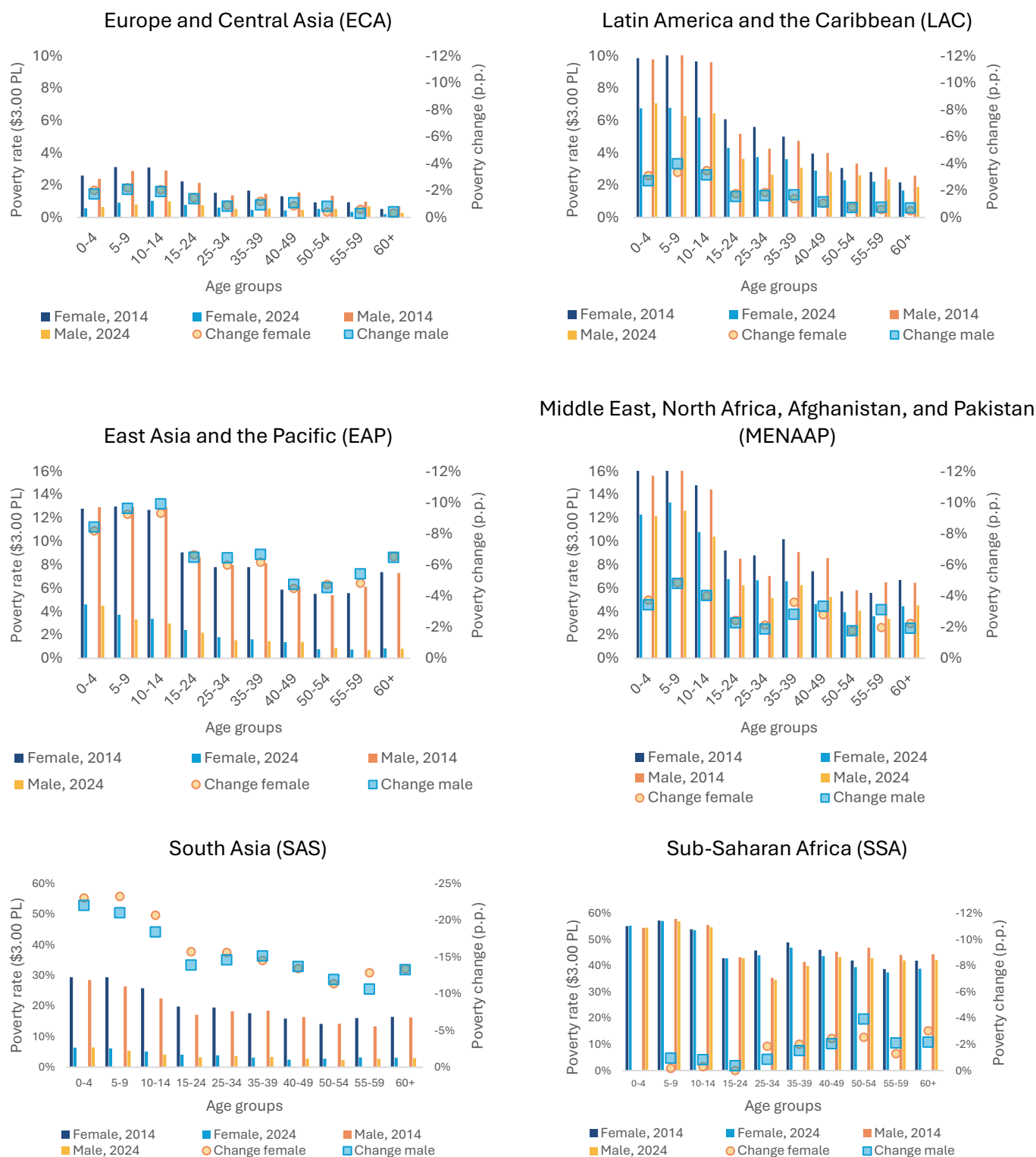
Message 2: Female poverty is unevenly distributed across regions, with women in Sub-Saharan Africa being disproportionately affected by it.

A closer look at female poverty across regions reveals stark disparities. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 74 percent of all women living in extreme poverty worldwide, equivalent to 295 million women; Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan follow, with 9 percent of all women living in poverty, equivalent to about 36 million women, while South Asia and East Asia and the Pacific account for 8 and 5 percent, respectively.

At the upper-middle income poverty line of \$8.30 a day, the geographic distribution of female poverty shifts. South Asia accounts for the largest share (35 percent), followed by Sub-

Saharan Africa (32 percent). East Asia and Pacific accounts for 16 percent, and Middle-East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan for 11 percent of women living in poverty.

Figure 2. Poverty rate (at \$3.00 PL) by sex, age group and region in 2014 vs 2024



Source: Own elaboration based on GMD 2014 and 2024 lineup

Note: Data includes 110 countries with two datapoints around 2014 and 2024

Message 3: The poverty–age curve has flattened, though youth remain more exposed

Over the past decade, female extreme poverty has declined significantly, except for Sub-Saharan Africa, where progress has stalled, in line with general poverty trends. The pace of reduction varies widely across regions. South Asia achieved the largest gains, reducing extreme poverty among women by about 80 percent across all stages of life. In the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the decline has been more pronounced among women aged 35 years and older, with a reduction of 33-38 percent. In Latin America and the Caribbean, progress has been more pronounced among girls aged 0-14, where poverty fell by 32-36 percent. In East Asia and the Pacific, female extreme poverty dropped to below 5 percent for all stages of life, with the greatest drop in adulthood: by 2024 extreme poverty rates were less than 1 percent. In contrast, Sub-Saharan Africa has seen virtually no improvement in the past decade.

Between 2014 and 2024, poverty gaps between children, adolescents, and adults narrowed considerably in most regions. Compared to a decade ago, the difference in poverty rates between children, adolescents and adults has narrowed in all regions but Sub-Saharan Africa. The flattening of the poverty–age curve suggests that policy interventions and economic growth have contributed to more equitable poverty reduction across age groups. However, Sub-Saharan Africa remains an outlier: children and adolescents continue to face significantly higher poverty rates than adults. This persistent disparity reflects structural challenges such as high fertility rates, limited access to quality education and social services, and sluggish economic progress in the region. While global progress has been made in reducing age-based poverty inequalities, targeted efforts are still needed in Sub-Saharan Africa to ensure that young people benefit equally from poverty alleviation initiatives.

Message 4: The presence of children, particularly in single-mother households with no other adults, strongly correlates with poverty

Despite the data limitations in measuring poverty at the individual level, examining the types of households in which women live provides valuable insight into which groups of girls and women are more likely to be poor⁵. As Table 2 shows, while the global average poverty rate at the \$3 a day poverty line is 11 percent globally, rates vary widely across household types. For example, 25 percent of households with only one adult, a female and children live in poverty, more than double the global average. Households with elderly adults (age 65 and above) with children also face similar high poverty rates, whereas households without children experience much lower poverty, below the global average and below the global SDG target of 3 percent. This pattern aligns with findings from Lara et al (2025), which document large disparities in child poverty worldwide. Sub-Saharan Africa stands out in

⁵ There is a large debate on the method for calculating poverty for specific groups across the lifecycle in absence of individual level data, such as headship, multidimensional poverty, and household composition (Muñoz et al, 2018). However, headship-based analysis is often criticized for inconsistencies in definition and its inability to capture intra-household inequalities (Buvinic & Gupta, 1997; Quisumbing et al., 2001). Multidimensional approaches provide broader metrics but typically remain at the household level and cannot fully reflect individual deprivation (Alkire & Santos, 2014; Batana et al, 2013). Household composition offers valuable insights into poverty risks, especially for groups like single mothers and single earner women.

terms of the presence of children as well as the lower progress in terms of reducing child poverty compared to other regions.

Table 2: Poverty rate at \$3, \$4.2 and \$8.3 PL by demographic typology⁶, 2024

	All	Two adults with children	One adult female with children	Multiple adult households with children	Only senior adults with children	Adults without children	Only seniors (65+) no children
Extreme poverty (US\$3.00 2021 PPP)	11%	14%	25%	15%	23%	2%	1%
LMIC poverty (US\$4.20 2021 PPP)	21%	25%	37%	28%	35%	5%	2%
UMIC poverty (US\$8.30 2021 PPP)	51%	56%	64%	65%	62%	28%	14%

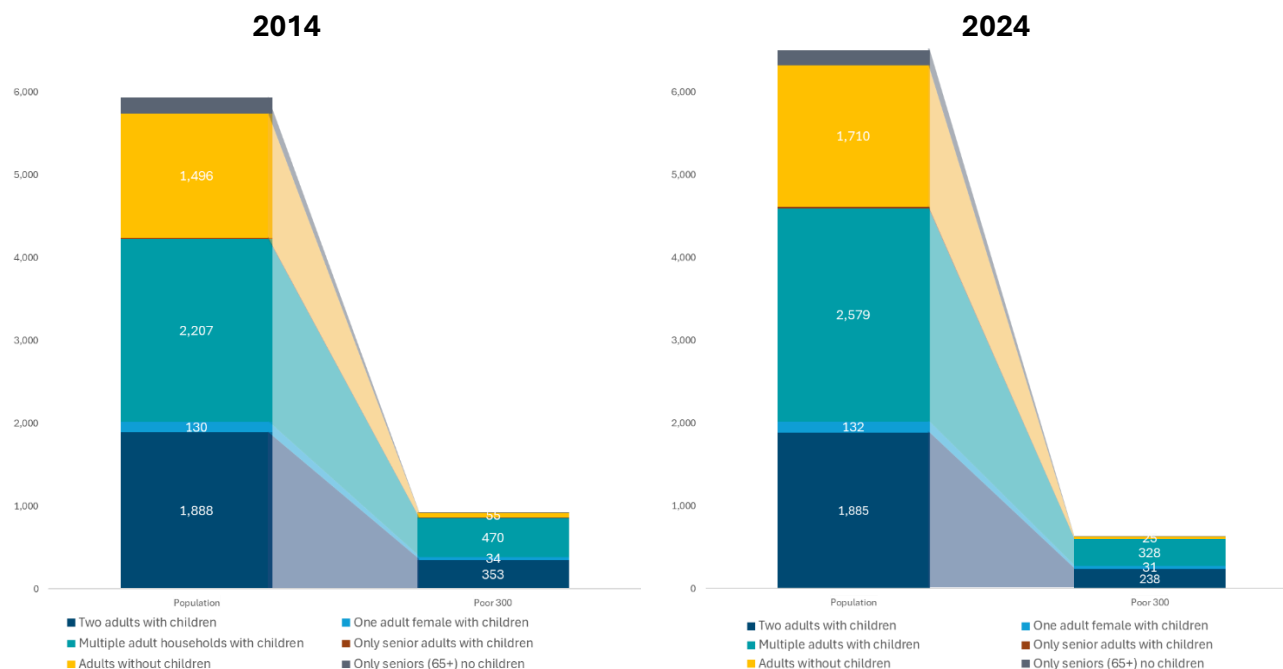
Source: Own elaboration based on GMD 2024 lineup.

Note: Includes 153 countries with latest available data.

While households composed by a single female adult with children are among the most vulnerable—they have the highest poverty rates globally—they represent only a relatively small share of the world’s poor in absolute terms. About 31 million people live in such type of households with children. In contrast, nearly 600 million people reside in households with two or more adults and children. This stark difference highlights that, although single-mother households face disproportionally high poverty risk, the majority of poor women—and the poor in general—live in larger households with multiple adults and children.

This finding has important implications for poverty reduction strategies and social protection policies. Targeted support for the most vulnerable groups, which in some contexts include single mother households, remains essential. However, a broader approach is needed to address the scale of poverty among multi-adult households with children. These larger households often contend with high dependency ratios, limited income-earning opportunities, and competing demands on resources, all of which contribute to their substantial share of global poverty. Moreover, since women are typically primary caregivers within these households, the presence of children not only shapes household poverty but also directly influences women’s own economic wellbeing and opportunities.

Figure 3: Total population vs. poor population (\$3.00 international poverty line) by demographic typology (millions)



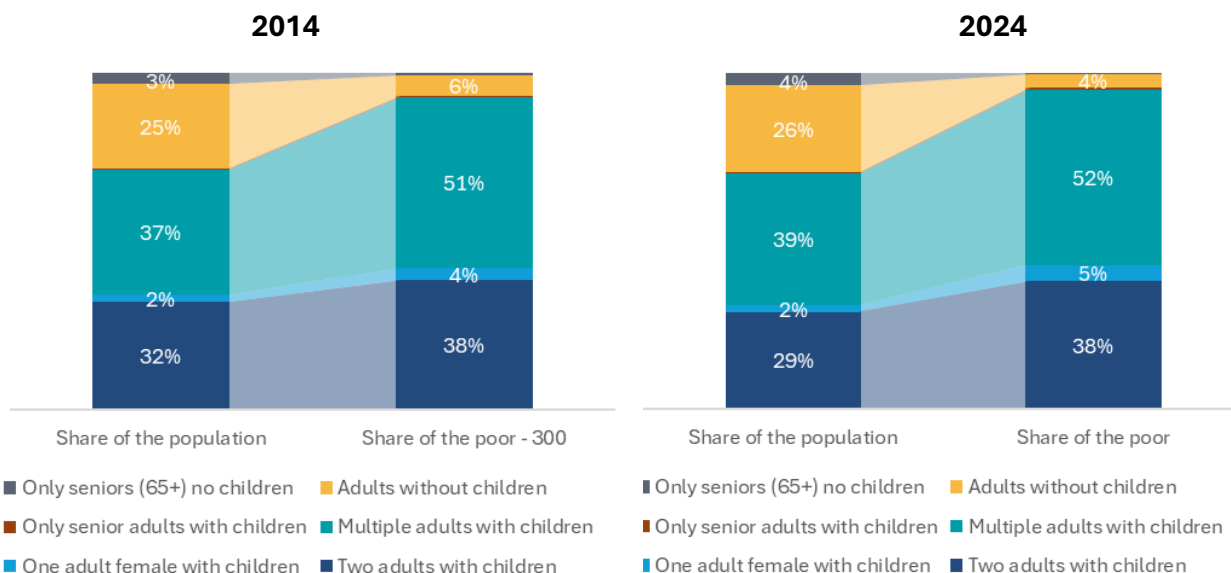
Source: Own elaboration based on GMD 2014 and 2024 lineup

Note: Data includes 110 countries with two datapoints around 2014 and 2024. Composition excludes households with missing values on age and gender.

Understanding the demographic composition of poor households is essential for effectively targeting poverty alleviation efforts. Globally, households with children account for about three-quarters of all households and over 90 percent of those living in poverty. Households with multiple adults and children comprise more than half of the population in poverty, despite comprising less than 40 percent of the total global population. Households with two adults and children make up 36 percent of those in poverty but 29 percent of all households. In contrast, adults without children constitute only four percent of the poor population and nearly 25 percent of the overall population.

Remarkably, the demographic profile of the poor has remained largely unchanged over the past decade (2014 to 2024). The majority live in households with two or more adults and children, followed by single adults with children, and finally adults without children.

Figure 4: Total population vs. poor population (\$3.00 international poverty line) by demographic typology (percentage)



Source: Own elaboration based on GMD 2014 and 2024 lineup

Note: Data includes 110 countries with two datapoints around 2014 and 2024. Composition excludes households with missing values on age and gender.

Message 5: Labor status strongly correlates with the probability of living in poverty

The risk of poverty is linked to the labor status of adults within the household. As shown in Table 3, households with no earners face the highest poverty rate (21 percent), followed by those with multiple earners (19 percent) and single-earner households (15 percent). This pattern reflects the economic composition of poor households, where the absence of earners significantly increases the probability of being poor. Single-earner households are less likely to be poor because they tend to be more educated, more urban, and have access to better jobs. In contrast, multiple-earner households are often found in rural areas, where adults have lower education levels and work in informal or low-paying jobs. The profile of single-earner households, with or without dependents, is also shaped by family formation decisions, as the decision to establish an independent household is generally correlated with the financial capacity to sustain it. Yet, single-earners households are a heterogeneous group. For instance, in many SSA countries, single-women-earner households are often those composed of widows or divorcees, who face significant vulnerabilities.

Table 3: Poverty rate at \$3, \$4.2 and \$8.3 PL by economic typology, 72024

	All	Single possible earner, with or without children	Single earner, with earner dependents, with or without children	Multiple earners, with or without children	No earners, with or without children
Extreme poverty (US\$3.00 2021 PPP)	18%	15%	15%	19%	21%
LMIC poverty (US\$4.20 2021 PPP)	30%	23%	27%	32%	29%
UMIC poverty (US\$8.30 2021 PPP)	56%	41%	59%	57%	47%

Source: Own elaboration based on GMD 2024 lineup.

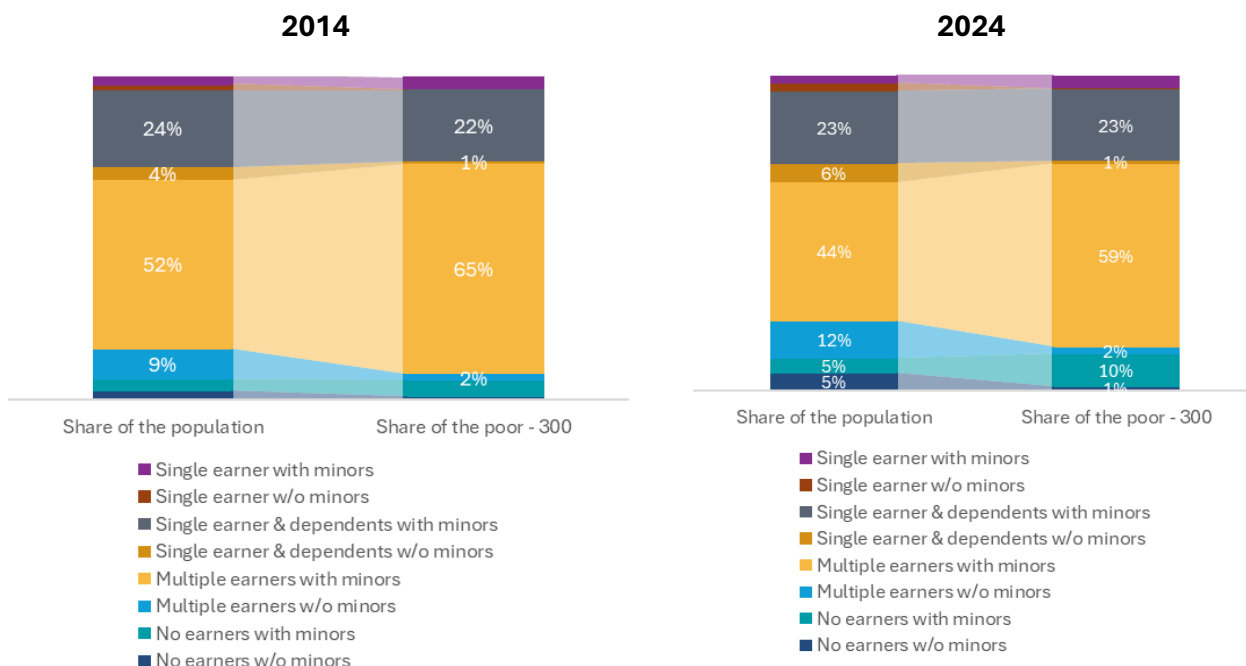
Note: Includes 134 countries with the latest available data.

Households with children are disproportionately represented among the poor compared to their share of the overall population. Figure 5 shows that non-earner households with minors account for 5 percent of the population but 10 percent of the poor, whereas non-earners without children also make up 5 percent of the population but just 1 percent of the poor. A similar pattern emerges among multiple-earner households: those with minors represent 44 percent of the population and 59 percent of the poor, while multiple-earner households without minors account for 12 percent of the population but only 2 percent of the poor. This pattern holds across all household types.

Over the last decade, the economic composition of extremely poor households has shifted towards non-earner households. The share of multiple-earner households among the poor declined from 65 to 59 percent, while the share of non-earner households with children doubled from 5 to 10 percent. In contrast, the proportion of single-earner households within the poor population has remained stable. Despite these changes, a large share of poor households today still includes multiple adults who are working.

These findings have clear implications for policy priorities. For non-earner households, efforts should focus on increasing labor force participation. For households where adults are already working, the priority should be to improve job quality and raise labor incomes.

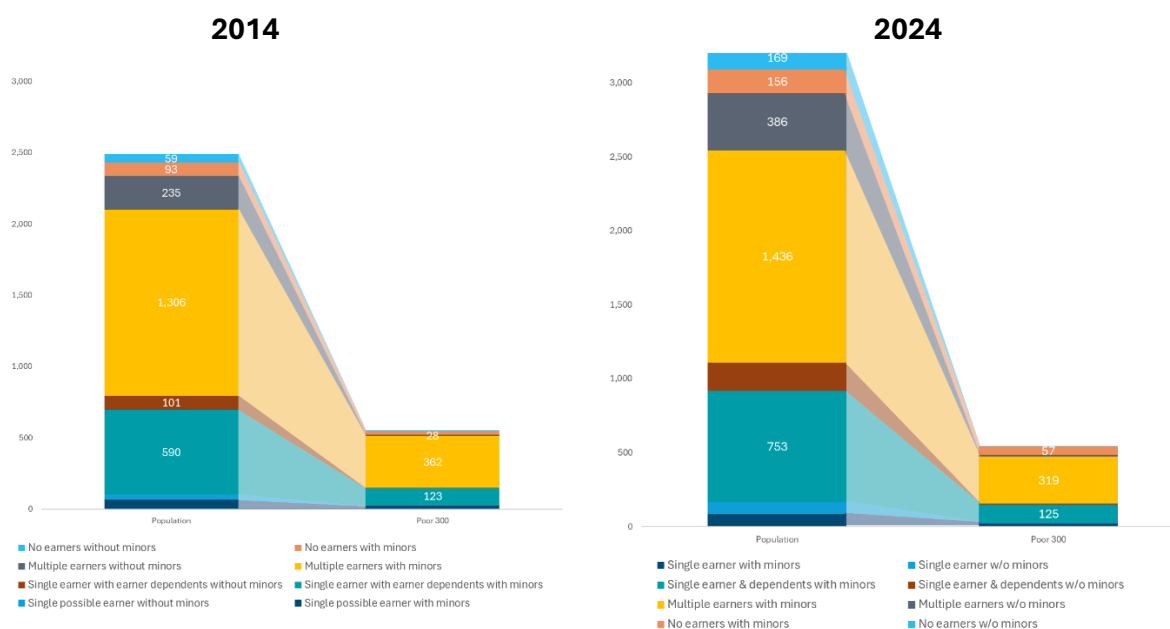
Figure 5. Share of the population vs share of the poor (\$3.00 PL) by year and economic typology



Source: Own elaboration based on GMD 2014 and 2024 lineup

Note: Data includes 93 countries with two datapoints around 2014 and 2024. Composition excludes households with missing values on labor status.

Figure 6. Total population vs poor population (\$3.00 PL) by year and economic typology



Source: Own elaboration based on GMD 2014 and 2024 lineup

Note: Data includes 93 countries with two datapoints around 2014 and 2024. Composition excludes households with missing values on labor status.

In conclusion, the global landscape of poverty—covering 110 countries with data from 2014 and 2024—reveals that while poverty among women has declined significantly, it remains deeply shaped by age, household structure, and access to economic opportunities. A disproportionate share of the poor are women particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and South Asia, where the concentration of poor women remains highest. The persistence of extreme poverty among women in Sub-Saharan Africa is especially striking. Effective efforts to combat poverty must therefore prioritize gender-sensitive and regionally tailored interventions, especially in SSA, focusing on expanding access to quality education and productive employment opportunities for women, as well as providing robust support to vulnerable households, particularly those led by women or with children. Finally, the findings also underscore the importance of improving access to jobs for those in households with no earners, while raising earnings for those living in multiple-earner households.

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ANNEX

A.1. Table of countries included in the GMD sample

	2024 Lineup		2014 - 2024 Lineup	
	Full sample	Economic typology sample	Full sample	Economic typology sample
Total countries	153	134	110	93
AGO	✓	✓	✗	✗
ALB	✓	✗	✓	✗
ARG	✓	✓	✓	✓
ARM	✓	✓	✓	✓
AUT	✓	✓	✓	✓
AZE	✓	✓	✗	✗
BDI	✓	✓	✓	✓
BEL	✓	✓	✓	✓
BEN	✓	✓	✓	✓
BFA	✓	✓	✓	✓
BGD	✓	✓	✓	✓
BGR	✓	✓	✓	✓
BIH	✓	✓	✗	✗
BLR	✓	✗	✓	✗
BLZ	✓	✓	✗	✗
BOL	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRA	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRB	✓	✓	✗	✗
BTN	✓	✗	✓	✗
BWA	✓	✓	✗	✗
CAF	✓	✓	✗	✗
CHE	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHL	✓	✓	✓	✓
CHN	✓	✗	✓	✗
CIV	✓	✓	✓	✓
CMR	✓	✗	✓	✗
COD	✓	✓	✓	✓
COG	✓	✓	✗	✗
COL	✓	✓	✓	✓
COM	✓	✓	✗	✗
CPV	✓	✓	✗	✗
CRI	✓	✓	✓	✓
CYP	✓	✓	✓	✓
CZE	✓	✓	✓	✓
DNK	✓	✓	✓	✓
DOM	✓	✓	✓	✓

	2024 Lineup		2014 - 2024 Lineup	
	Full sample	Economic typology sample	Full sample	Economic typology sample
ECU	✓	✓	✓	✓
EGY	✓	✓	✓	✓
ESP	✓	✓	✓	✓
EST	✓	✓	✓	✓
ETH	✓	✓	✓	✓
FIN	✓	✓	✓	✓
FJI	✓	✓	✓	✓
FRA	✓	✓	✓	✓
FSM	✓	✓	✗	✗
GAB	✓	✓	✗	✗
GBR	✓	✗	✓	✗
GEO	✓	✗	✓	✗
GHA	✓	✓	✗	✗
GIN	✓	✓	✓	✓
GMB	✓	✓	✓	✓
GNB	✓	✓	✗	✗
GNQ	✓	✓	✗	✗
GRC	✓	✓	✓	✓
GRD	✓	✓	✗	✗
GTM	✓	✓	✓	✓
HND	✓	✓	✓	✓
HRV	✓	✓	✓	✓
HTI	✓	✓	✗	✗
HUN	✓	✗	✓	✗
IDN	✓	✓	✓	✓
IND	✓	✗	✓	✗
IRL	✓	✓	✓	✓
IRN	✓	✗	✓	✗
IRQ	✓	✓	✓	✓
ISL	✓	✓	✓	✓
ITA	✓	✓	✓	✓
JAM	✓	✓	✗	✗
JOR	✓	✓	✗	✗
KAZ	✓	✓	✓	✓
KEN	✓	✓	✓	✓
KGZ	✓	✗	✓	✗
KIR	✓	✓	✗	✗
LAO	✓	✓	✓	✓

	2024 Lineup		2014 - 2024 Lineup	
	Full sample	Economic typology sample	Full sample	Economic typology sample
LBN	✓	✓	✓	✓
LBR	✓	✓	✓	✓
LCA	✓	✓	✗	✗
LKA	✓	✓	✓	✓
LSO	✓	✓	✗	✗
LTU	✓	✓	✓	✓
LUX	✓	✓	✓	✓
LVA	✓	✓	✓	✓
MAR	✓	✓	✗	✗
MDA	✓	✓	✓	✓
MDG	✓	✓	✓	✓
MDV	✓	✓	✓	✓
MEX	✓	✓	✓	✓
MHL	✓	✓	✗	✗
MKD	✓	✓	✓	✓
MLI	✓	✓	✗	✗
MLT	✓	✗	✓	✗
MMR	✓	✓	✓	✓
MNE	✓	✓	✓	✓
MNG	✓	✓	✓	✓
MOZ	✓	✓	✓	✓
MRT	✓	✓	✓	✓
MUS	✓	✓	✓	✓
MWI	✓	✓	✓	✓
MYS	✓	✓	✓	✓
NAM	✓	✓	✗	✗
NER	✓	✓	✓	✓
NGA	✓	✓	✓	✓
NIC	✓	✓	✗	✗
NLD	✓	✗	✓	✗
NOR	✓	✓	✓	✓
NPL	✓	✓	✗	✗
PAK	✓	✓	✓	✓
PAN	✓	✓	✓	✓
PER	✓	✓	✓	✓
PHL	✓	✓	✓	✓
PNG	✓	✓	✗	✗
POL	✓	✓	✓	✓
PRT	✓	✓	✓	✓
PRY	✓	✓	✓	✓

	2024 Lineup		2014 - 2024 Lineup	
	Full sample	Economic typology sample	Full sample	Economic typology sample
PSE	✓	✓	✓	✓
ROU	✓	✓	✓	✓
RUS	✓	✗	✓	✗
RWA	✓	✓	✓	✓
SDN	✓	✗	✗	✗
SEN	✓	✓	✓	✓
SLB	✓	✓	✗	✗
SLE	✓	✓	✓	✓
SLV	✓	✓	✓	✓
SRB	✓	✓	✓	✓
SSD	✓	✗	✗	✗
STP	✓	✓	✗	✗
SUR	✓	✓	✗	✗
SVK	✓	✓	✓	✓
SVN	✓	✓	✓	✓
SWE	✓	✓	✓	✓
SWZ	✓	✓	✗	✗
SYC	✓	✗	✓	✗
TCD	✓	✓	✓	✓
TGO	✓	✓	✓	✓
THA	✓	✓	✓	✓
TJK	✓	✗	✓	✗
TLS	✓	✓	✗	✗
TON	✓	✓	✓	✓
TUN	✓	✓	✓	✓
TUR	✓	✓	✓	✓
TUV	✓	✓	✗	✗
TZA	✓	✓	✓	✓
UGA	✓	✓	✓	✓
URY	✓	✓	✓	✓
UZB	✓	✓	✗	✗
VNM	✓	✓	✓	✓
VUT	✓	✓	✗	✗
WSM	✓	✓	✗	✗
XKX	✓	✓	✓	✓
YEM	✓	✓	✗	✗
ZAF	✓	✓	✗	✗
ZMB	✓	✗	✓	✗
ZWE	✓	✓	✗	✗