



Women in Tea

Factsheet

Overview

It is said that when a woman “is equipped with the proper resources, [she has] the power to lift whole families and communities out of poverty”.¹ Empowering women is an effective strategy for poverty alleviation, and economic empowerment.¹ Not only is women’s empowerment the right thing to do – it is the smart thing to do.

Tea, like many agricultural industries, relies on a female workforce. Women make up the majority of tea pickers and farmers in a number of countries, and are often underrepresented at senior managerial levels.

Women and girls make up two-thirds of the 1.4 billion people who live in extreme poverty.³ Generally speaking, women who work in agriculture are highly vulnerable to poverty, poor levels of educational attainment, the effects of climate change, and volatile market conditions, among other issues.⁴

This factsheet highlights some of the key gender issues across the regions we work in, using references and data points from third party sources.

Gender Equality Index ranking

Recognising and addressing gender inequality is vital to achieving sustainability across the tea sector. The Gender Inequality Index⁵ is a measurement created by the United Nations Development Programme that helps us to understand gender inequality across three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market.⁶

The rankings shed light on the position of women in different countries, allowing us to see how countries perform against each other. Out of 189 countries, here’s how some of the major tea-growing regions in which we work rank (where 1 is the least inequality and 189 the most):

- Kenya: 126.
- Malawi: 142.
- Rwanda: 92.
- China: 39.
- India: 123.
- Indonesia: 121.
- Sri Lanka: 90.



Female population in rural areas

The cultivation of tea takes place on estates and smallholder farms within rural areas. Women in these areas usually work more hours than men, have poorer literacy rates, are more likely to experience gender-based violence and are most vulnerable to food insecurity and poor health.⁷

Women often make up just under 50% of rural populations in tea growing regions, as this list indicates.

Proportion of rural population that is female:⁸

- Kenya: 43% (2020).
- Malawi: 49% (2019).
- Rwanda: 49% (2018).
- China: 47% (2000).
- India: 46% (2014).
- Indonesia: 49% (2020).
- Sri Lanka: 51% (2012).

Women working in tea

As in many agricultural industries, tea relies on a female workforce. Many women who work in tea are pluckers, a labour-intensive job.⁹ In Assam, India, we know that around 365,000 women work in the estate sector alone.¹⁰

Here's the proportion of tea workers who are women across some of the regions that we operate in:

- Malawi: 30%.¹¹
- Assam, India: >50%.¹²
- Indonesia: 30%.¹³
- Sri Lanka: >50%.¹⁴

Agricultural workforce

Women make essential contributions to agriculture and rural economic activities in all developing countries, and comprise around 43% of the agricultural labour force.¹⁵

In tea, women may work as tea farmers on their own account, as unpaid workers on family farms and as paid or unpaid labourers on other farms.¹⁶ Here's the share of employed women working in agriculture in the regions we work in:¹⁷

- Kenya: 60% (2020).
- Malawi: 43% (2020).
- Rwanda: 71% (2020).
- China: 22% (2020).
- India: 54% (2020).
- Indonesia: 26% (2020).



Women in managerial positions

Though women make up the majority of the tea sector's total workforce, it is rare to see them occupying managerial positions. Across all of the countries in which we operate, it is unlikely for women in the tea sector to either stand for leadership roles, or to support others to do so.

Here is a breakdown of the proportion of managerial positions held by women across all sectors, in some of the regions that we operate in:¹⁸

- Kenya: 24.8% (2006).
- Malawi: 15.6% (2013).
- Rwanda: 28.6% (2019).
- India: 14.6% (2019).
- Indonesia: 29.8% (2019).
- Sri Lanka: 26% (2019).



Maternal mortality rate

The majority of maternal deaths occur in low-resource settings and are preventable.¹⁹ Women in rural tea communities often lack adequate access to basic services, including healthcare, nutrition, sanitation and housing.²⁰

The maternal mortality rate shows the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

Anaemia is a leading contributor to maternal deaths and is caused by a poor diet. In India, around 50% of maternal deaths are associated with anaemia, and many young women in the country's tea communities are anaemic. Assam is a key tea growing region in India, and it has the highest maternal mortality rate in the whole of the country.²¹

This list outlines the maternal mortality rate in the regions that we operate in:²²

- Kenya: 342 (2017).
- Malawi: 349 (2017).
- Rwanda: 248 (2017).
- Assam, India: 363.²³
- China: 29 (2017).
- Indonesia: 177 (2017).
- Sri Lanka: 36 (2017).



Access to education

Better educated women tend to be more informed about nutrition and healthcare, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and their children are usually healthier, should they choose to become mothers.²⁴

Across all of the regions in which we work, girls stay in education for a shorter amount of time than their male counterparts. Girls are significantly less likely to attend school in rural areas, where tea is grown.²⁵ For every one year of schooling that boys receive, girls received:²⁶

- Kenya: 0.83.
- Malawi: 0.8.
- Rwanda: 0.8.
- China: 0.9.
- India: 0.57.
- Indonesia: 0.9.
- Sri Lanka: 0.9.

Child marriage

Girls in tea communities are vulnerable to a range of child protection issues including abuse, leaving education early, trafficking and child marriage.²⁷

Child marriage has a significant impact on the development and wellbeing of girls, and results in increased rates of gender-based violence, teenage pregnancies, and school dropouts.²⁸

Across some of the regions we operate, here is the proportion of girls that are married before their 18th birthday:²⁹

- Kenya: 23%.
- Malawi: 42%.
- Rwanda: 7%.
- India: 27%.
- Indonesia: 16%.
- Sri Lanka: 12%.

ETP's programmes

ETP runs a number of programmes with a gender focus, working to empower women to make strategic and informed life choices and use their knowledge and skills to challenge the barriers they face.

Our programmes tackle issues that women face at home, in their communities and in the workplace. They range from addressing issues of gender-based violence, to social impact training, and improving equality in the workplace.

You can learn about some of our initiatives here:

- [The Improving Lives Programme in Assam.](#)
- [The Women of Tea Programme in Sri Lanka.](#)
- [Malawi Tea 2020.](#)
- [Improving Opportunities for Women in Kenya's Tea Workforce.](#)

Sources

- [1] <https://www.careinternational.org.uk/who-we-are/about-care>
- [2] <https://eige.europa.eu/resources/0910gender.pdf>
- [3] <https://www.ippf.org/our-priorities/women-girls>
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Facts and figures

It is said that when a woman “is equipped with the proper resources, [she has] the power to lift whole families and communities out of poverty”.¹

Empowering women is an effective strategy for poverty alleviation and furthermore gender equality is strongly correlated with economic productivity.² Not only is women’s empowerment the right thing to do – it’s the smart thing to do. Tea, like many agricultural industries, relies on a female workforce. Women make up the majority of tea pickers and farmers in a number of countries and are often underrepresented at senior managerial levels.

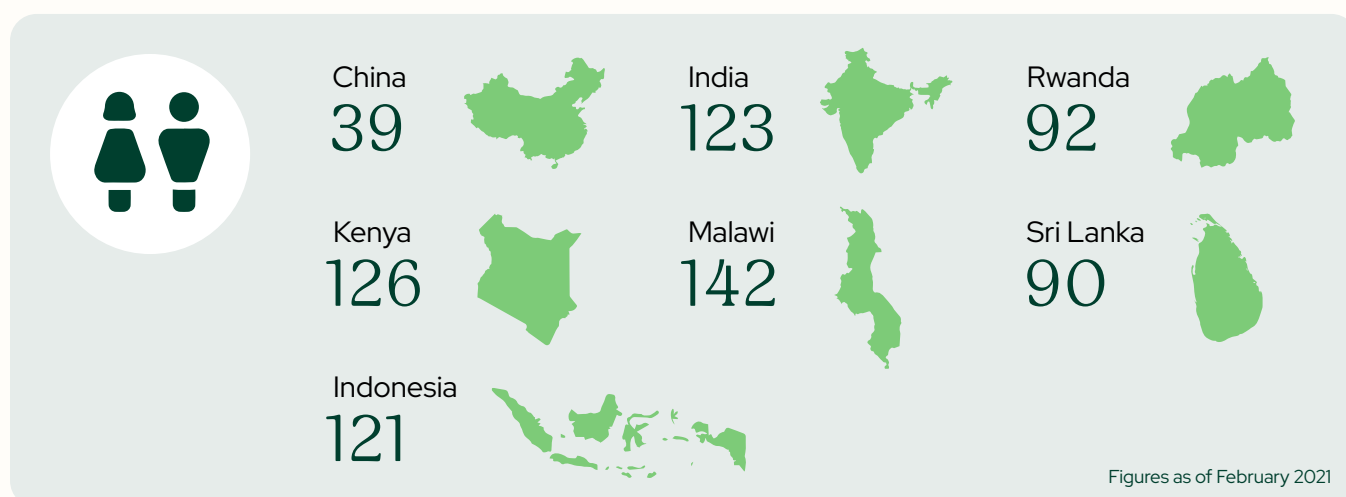
Women and girls make up two-thirds of the 1.4 billion people who live in extreme poverty.³ Generally speaking, women who work in agriculture are highly vulnerable to poverty, poor levels of educational attainment, the effects of climate change, and volatile market conditions, among other issues.⁴

On average, women comprise around 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries.⁵

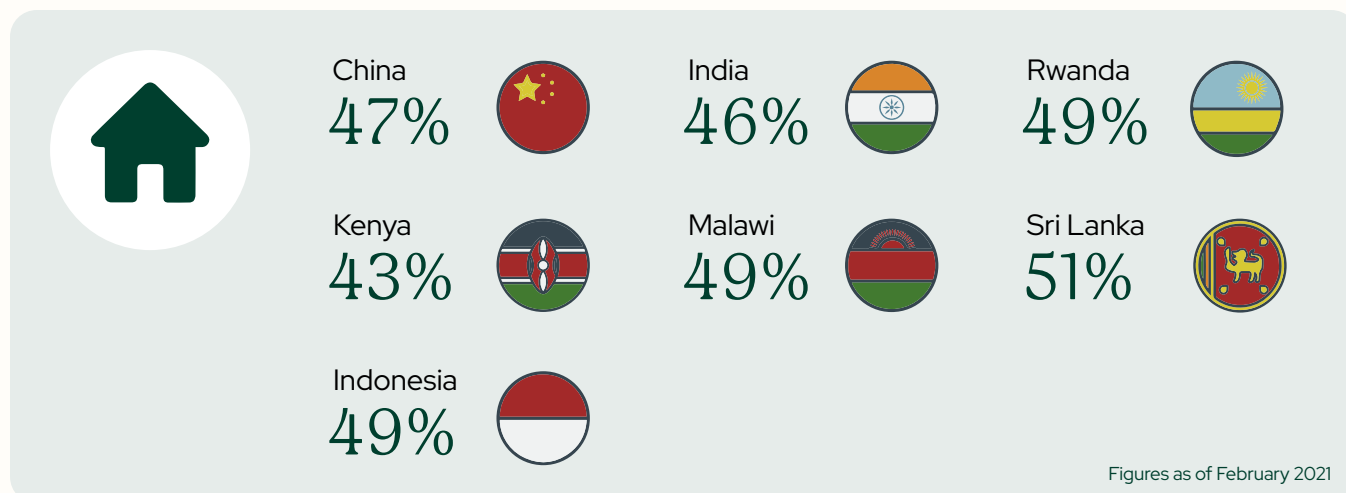
For a full list of references and further reading, please visit our [website](#).

Gender inequality index ranking

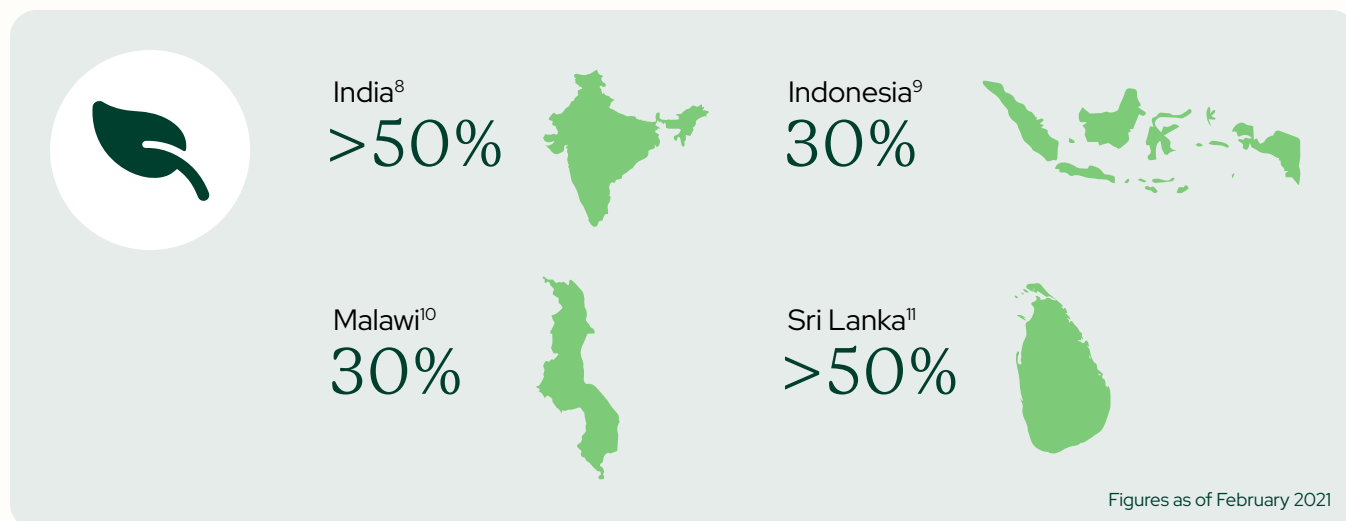
(out of 189, where 1 = least and 189 = most inequality)⁶



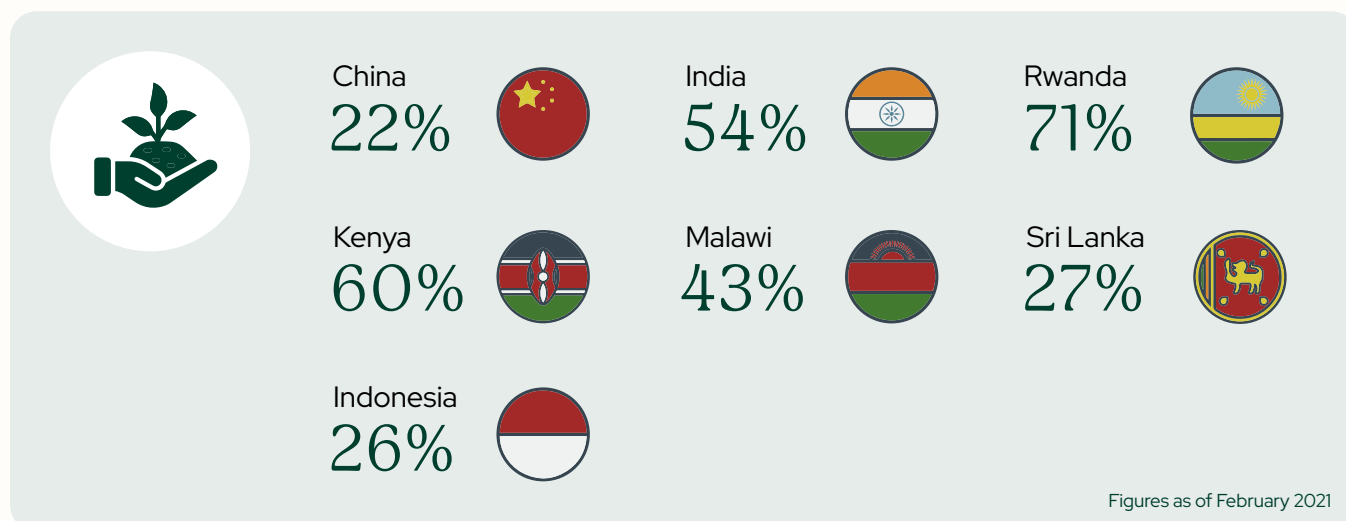
Percentage of rural population that is female⁷



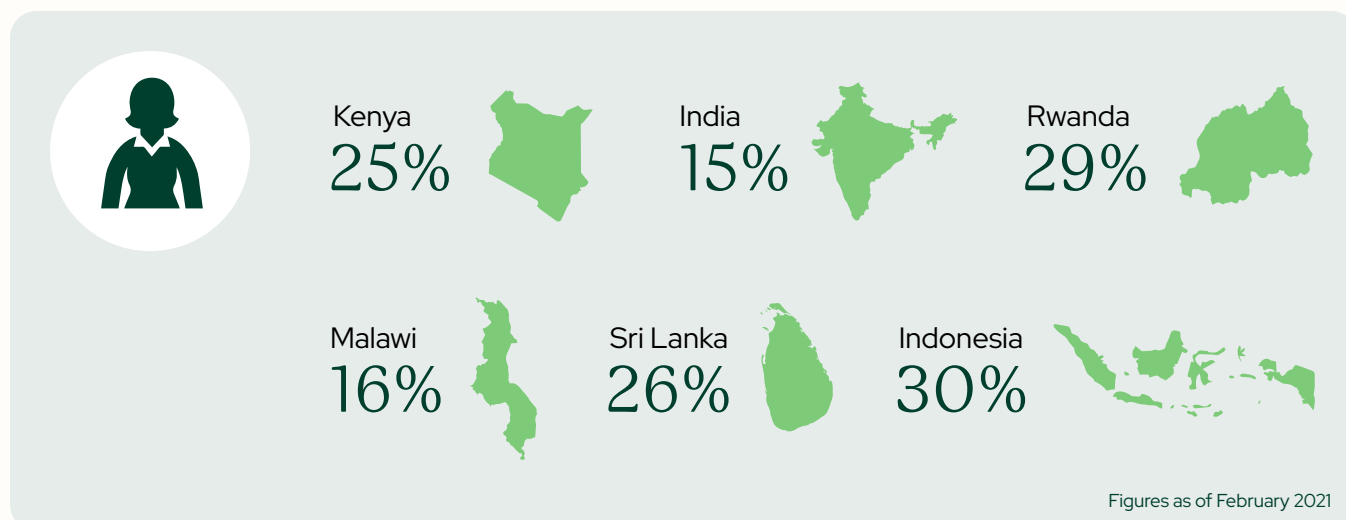
Proportion of tea workers who are women



Percentage of agriculture workforce that is female¹²

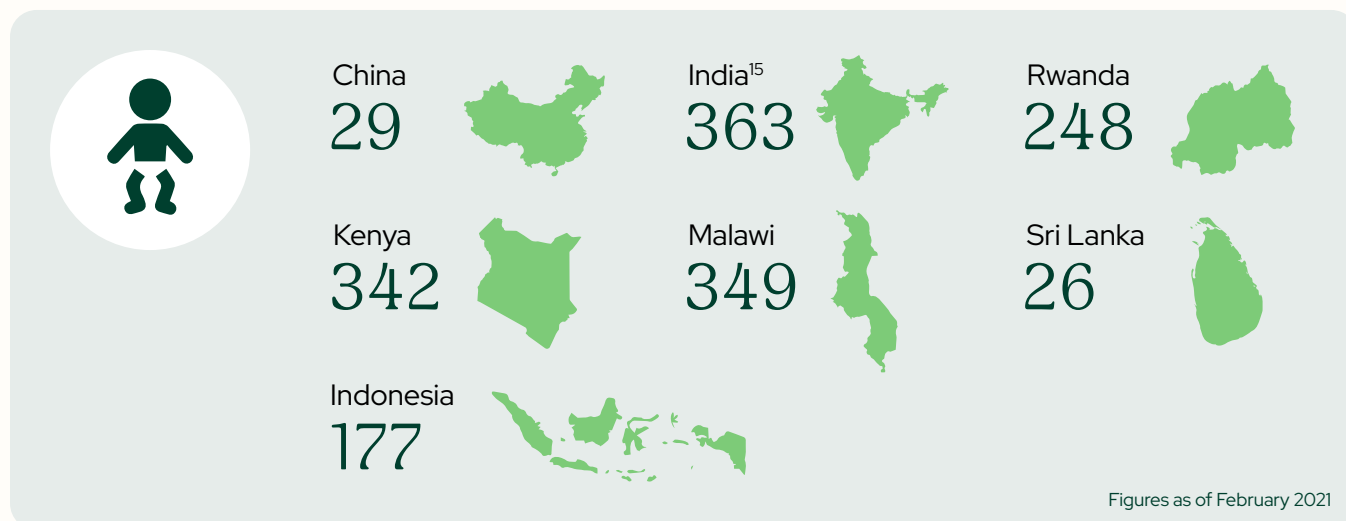


Percentage of managerial positions held by women¹³

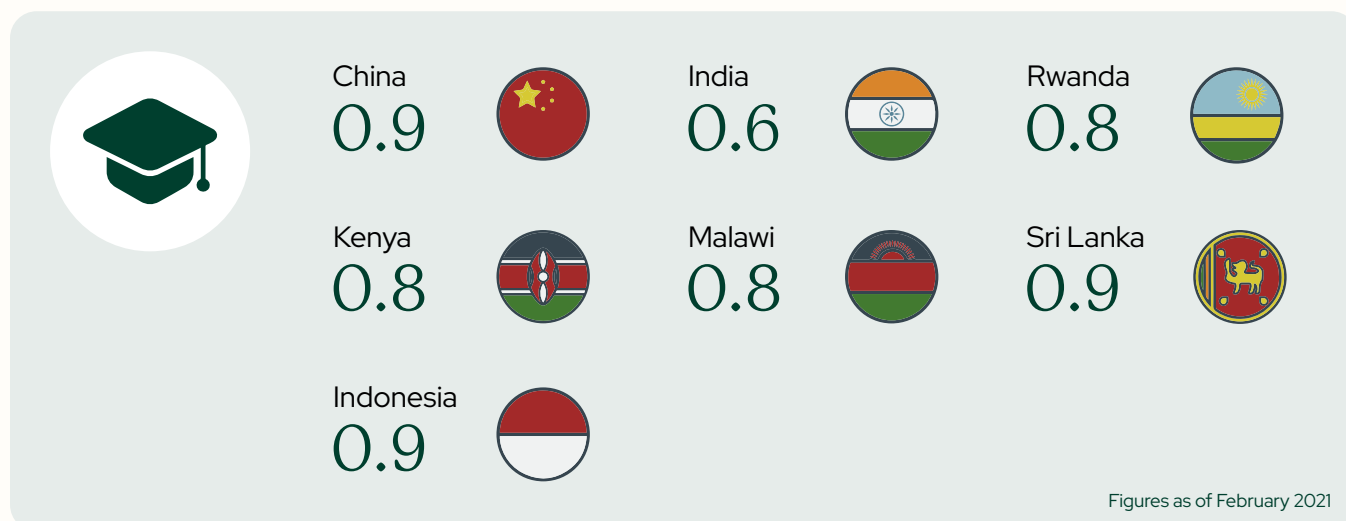


Maternal mortality rate

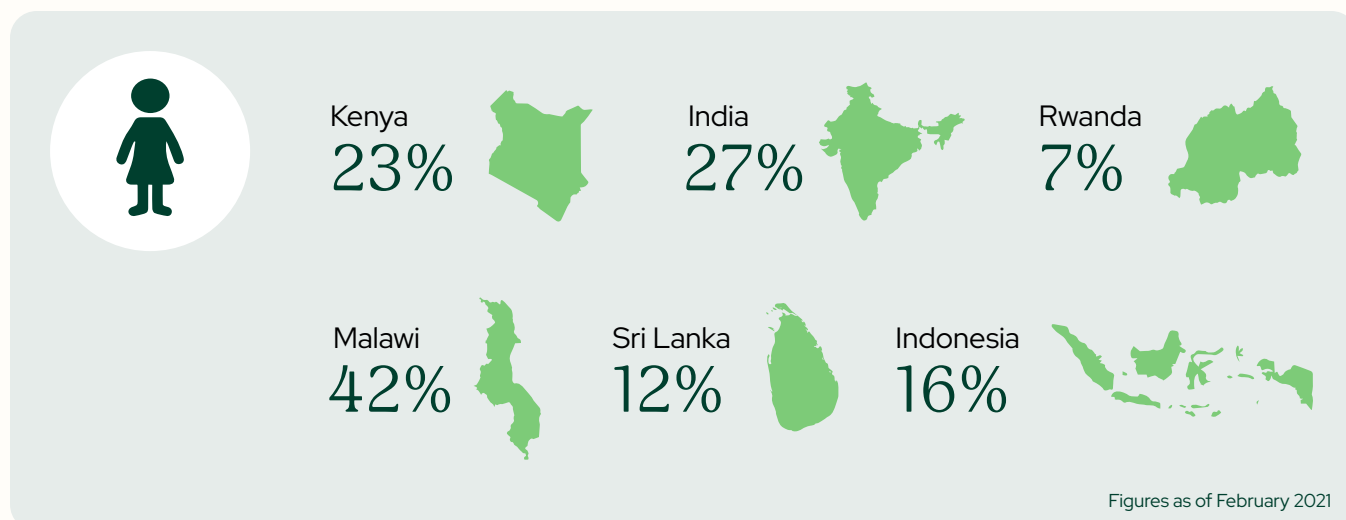
(per 100,000 live births)¹⁴



Education For every one year of schooling that boys receive, girls receive...¹⁶



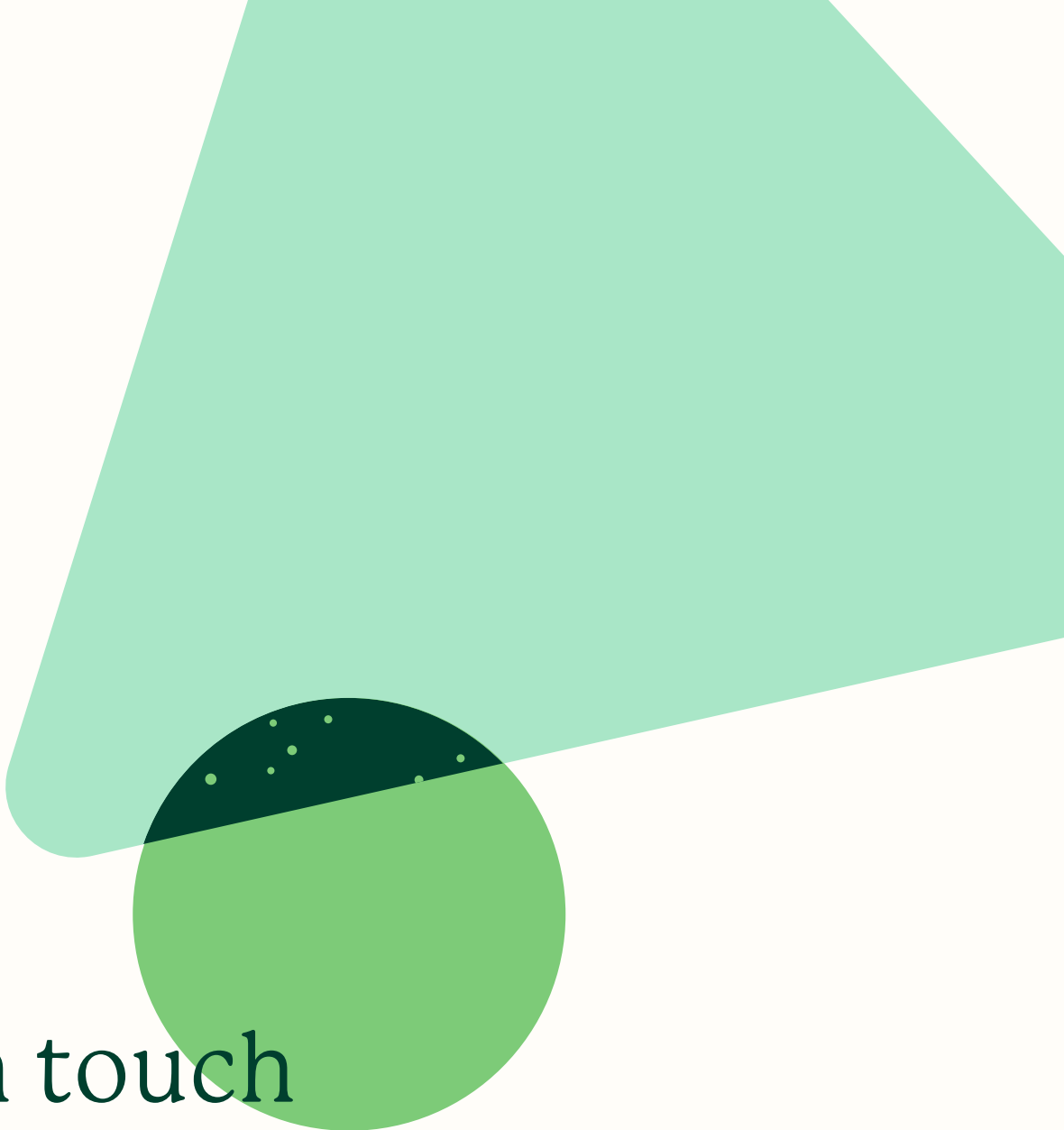
Percentage of girls married by 18 years old¹⁷



Sources

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