

Taiwan leads Asia in gender equality

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Taiwan ranks first in Asia and eighth worldwide in gender equality, due mainly to its higher female participation in politics, the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS) said yesterday.

The agency came up with the rankings using the criteria in the gender inequality index (GII) introduced by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in 2010.

The GII is a composite index that measures the disparity between female and male achievements in three areas: reproductive health, empowerment and the labor market.

It ranges from zero — which indicates that women and men fare equally — to 1 — which indicates that women fare as poorly as possible in all three areas.

Since Taiwan is not a member of the UN, it is not ranked in the GII.

However, using the index's criteria, the DGBAS calculated Taiwan's score in 2017 at 0.056, placing it eighth worldwide and first in Asia.

In the UNDP's 2017 GII, Sweden ranked first among 160 nations with a score of 0.039, followed by Denmark with 0.040, and Switzerland and the Netherlands tied in third place at 0.044.

In terms of empowerment, Taiwan's female participation in politics has been on the rise, the DGBAS said.

Taiwanese women held 38.1 percent of the legislative seats in 2017, up 16.9 percentage points from 2007, and the female-to-male ratio in the legislature was higher than that in other Asian countries, including Singapore, China, South Korea and Japan, the DGBAS said.

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The labor force participation rate in Taiwan for women aged 15 and above was 50.9 percent in 2017, 16.2 percentage points lower than that for men, but the gender gap was smaller than that of Singapore, Japan and South Korea, the agency said.

Furthermore, women took 16.7 percent of the mayoral seats in the nation's six special municipalities in last year's local elections, the same as in the 2014 poll, it said.

As for the other 16 cities and counties, women held 37.5 percent of the mayoral and commissioner seats, an increase of 31.2 percentage points from 2014 and marking the first time the rate went past one-third since 1997, the DGBAS said.

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