

Synopsis of the Status of Key Development Statistics in Africa

Inequality Statistics¹

Motivation and Objectives

Inequality has become central to Africa's development agenda because it determines how the benefits of economic growth are distributed, influences the pace of poverty reduction and shapes access to income, wealth, education, health and other opportunities across individuals, households and population groups. Yet inequality remains inconsistently measured and irregularly reported across the continent, with infrequent household surveys, divergent methodologies, limited administrative data and weak integration of emerging data sources making it difficult to compare countries, monitor changes over time and design effective policies for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The brief has four main objectives: (i) assess the availability, frequency and recency of inequality statistics across African countries; (ii) examine the scope, interrelationships and conceptual differences among the dimensions and indicators used to measure inequality; (iii) assess the data available for analyzing the relationship between inequality, economic growth and well-being; and (iv) examine how gaps in timely, comparable and comprehensive inequality statistics affect the design and evaluation of policies for poverty reduction and inclusive growth.

Highlights of the Status of Statistics

1. More than 50.0 percent of African countries do not have statistics on the most widely used inequality indicator (Gini coefficient based on consumption expenditure) in the last five years.
2. The difference between the recency of consumption expenditure inequality estimates across African countries is more than a decade, ranging from 2011 (Algeria, Congo Rep) to 2024 (Comoros).
3. Income and wealth Gini coefficient in Africa have not followed a discernible pattern in the last four decades; income inequality has declined gradually since the early 200s, while wealth inequality has remained persistently high, with coefficients of variation of 2.16 percent and 1.88 percent, respectively.
4. Almost (27 out of 31) all African countries that have at least two data points on wealth inequalities have an average inter-survey period of more than five years, with Côte d'Ivoire leading with 10 years.
5. Divergence between World Bank Poverty and Inequality and NSO-reported estimates, compiled in UNU-WIDER World Income Inequality Database, for selected African countries, ranges between 0.5 and 7.0 percentage points, with Mozambique leading with 7.0 percentage points.
6. Differences in the type of measure of inequality across African countries record contrasting directions, with South Africa depicting a higher Palma index than Gini, and Angola the opposite.

¹ A deep dive on the status of different spaces of inequality (income, consumption expenditure, wealth (asset), education, health, spatial, gender, labour market and fiscal) in Africa is yet to occur.