

The Fabric of Inequalities

Dimensions, Causes, and Consequences

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Introduction

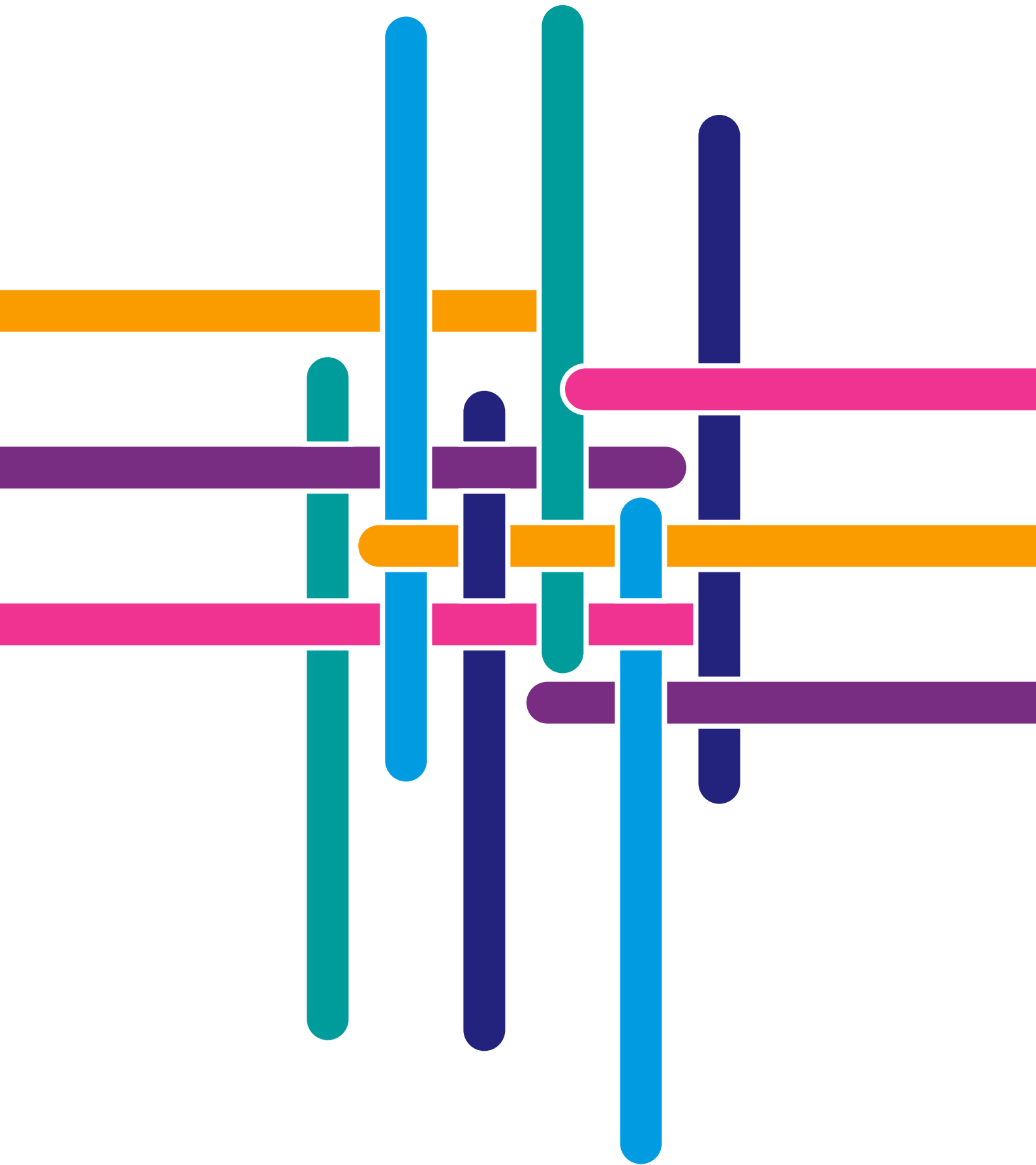


Inequalities today are pervasive. They are numerous, interwoven and overlapping. Together they create a fabric of privilege and marginalization, that favors some and disadvantages others.

Despite the international commitment to reducing inequalities,¹ many are still increasing, whilst others are falling far too slowly. Inequalities can cause serious harm to individuals, societies, and the natural systems that sustain all life on earth. Their significant historical legacies shape many aspects of our daily lives. Although we typically experience inequalities in localized contexts, for example your neighbor being better off than you, their causes lie primarily in much larger structures, narratives, and systems that shape them at a regional, national, or even global level. Inequalities exist between individuals and social groups, as well as between regions. Vulnerability to the negative impacts of the climate crisis is very unequally distributed, to take just one example. Moreover, inequalities often have a historical dimension, as debt and wealth are transferred across generations. The extent of inequalities and our understanding of them, including which inequalities are generally considered acceptable, has varied significantly over time and across regions. Furthering our understanding of inequalities is the first step towards addressing them.

The Robert Bosch Stiftung is committed to advancing the common good following the legacy of its founder Robert Bosch. Inequalities constitute obstacles to achieving the common good and building a world in which all people can live with dignity, enjoy self-determination, and are able to reach their full potential. Since the beginning of the Foundation's work on inequalities with a dedicated team in 2020, around 100 organizations have received support for their work on reducing inequalities. This paper outlines the central concepts that form the basis of the Foundation's work on inequalities.

It presents various dimensions of inequalities, including vertical and horizontal inequalities as well as their intersections in practice. Some of the principal causes of inequalities will be discussed, including their historical roots and preservation in economic systems, society, and political structures. Finally, the broader consequences of inequalities for individuals and across societies will be considered, including their impact on health, social cohesion, and economic development. The conclusion provides some ideas for how inequalities can be addressed at a systemic level to achieve fairer and more equal societies.



Dimensions of Inequality

Inequalities exist in many forms and across multiple dimensions and can, thus, be categorized in various ways. One of the most widely used categorizations is that of vertical and horizontal inequalities. It is important to note that the boundaries between different dimensions of inequality are not clear-cut. Dimensions of inequality do not only exist in parallel to one another but overlap and interact. The intersections of these different dimensions as well as their societal impacts, are further explained in the last section of this paper.

Vertical Inequalities

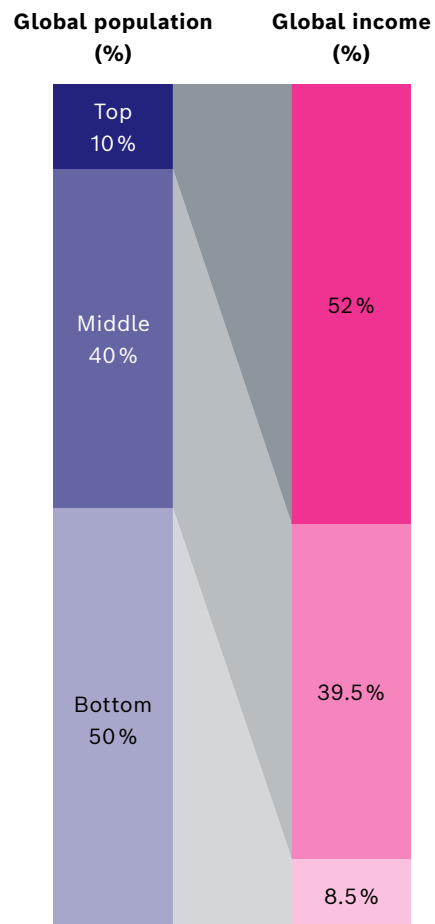
Vertical inequalities refer to **hierarchical disparities within a society or a group**. They can typically be expressed through data and often relate to how much power and status an individual or group has within a given society. There is a significant overlap between vertical inequalities and the concept of **inequality of outcome**. Inequality of outcome refers to the measurable, material differences in resources and living conditions among individuals and groups. Three central dimensions of vertical inequalities are listed below.

Income

Income inequality relates to the differences in the amount of money that people earn on a daily, monthly, or annual basis. Comparisons of global income inequality look at all earners across the globe and typically sort them into deciles (groups of ten percent) according to the amount that they earn to compare them. This can be used to demonstrate two important aspects of global inequality. Firstly, unequal incomes between countries, as well as unequal incomes within countries themselves. Global income inequality has varied significantly over time and is much higher today than it was in 1820.² Over time the share of the 'economic pie' going to the poorest half of the world's population through income has halved from 14% in 1820 to 7% in 2020.³ In comparison, the share of those on the highest incomes has risen significantly, with over half of total global income going to the top 10% of global earners in 2021.⁴ The driving force of rising global income inequality in the last 40 years has been the increasing income inequality

within countries.⁵ In fact, in 2019, 7 out of 10 people lived in countries in which income inequality had risen between 1990–2019.⁶

Global Income Inequality

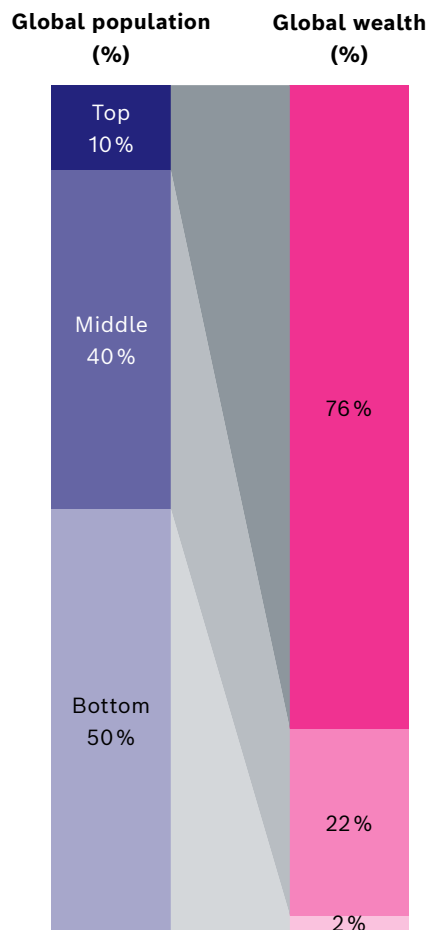


Interpretation: The bottom 50% of households globally captures 8.5% of total income measured at Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). The top 10% globally captured 52% of total income in 2021. Incomes are measured after the operation of pension and unemployment systems and before taxes and transfers. Sources and series: wir2022.wid.world/methodology⁷

Wealth

Wealth inequalities represent the immense gap in ownership of valuable resources, such as savings, property, investments, and other assets that hold monetary value. Wealth inequality is one of the largest and most significant inequalities of our time. In 2021, the wealthiest 10% of the world population possessed 76% of total global wealth, compared to the bottom half, who possessed only 2%.⁸ Furthermore, the global wealth gap is widening. The mega-fortunes of the super-rich have been growing two to three times faster (6 to 9% per year) than the wealth of the average person (3.2% per year) since 1995.⁹ In this timeframe, the share of global wealth possessed by billionaires, around 2,500 individuals in 2021, has tripled from 1% to over 3%.

Global Wealth Inequality

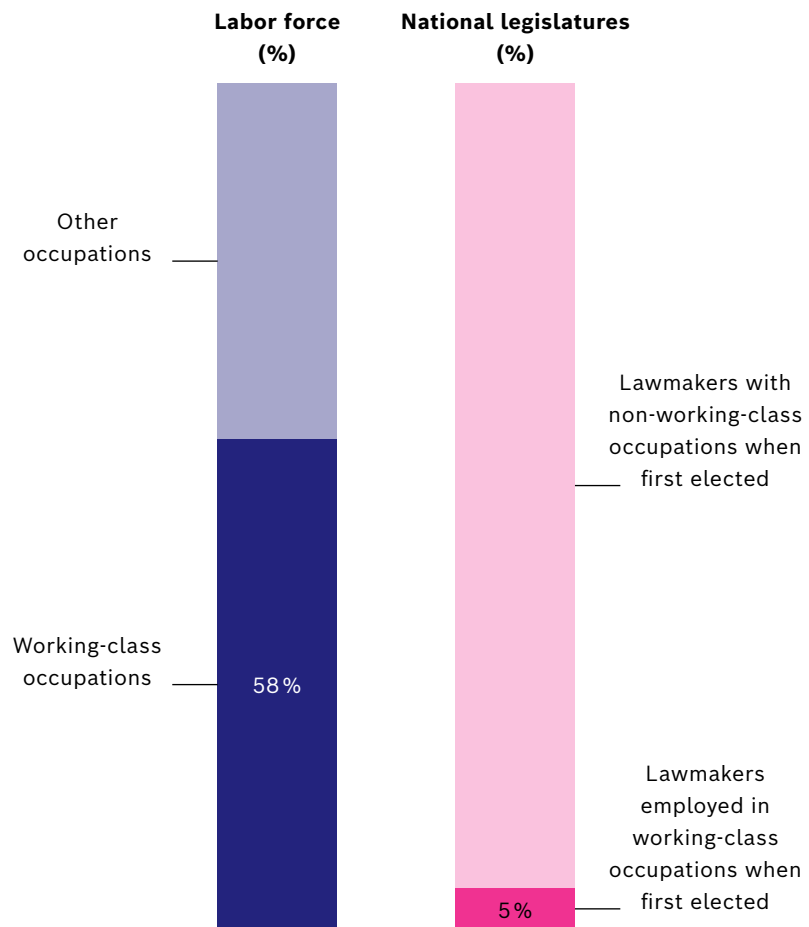


Interpretation: The bottom 50% globally owns 2% of wealth (at Purchasing Power Parity). The top 10% globally owns 76% of total household wealth in 2021. Sources and series: wir2022.wid.world/methodology.¹⁰

Political power

Inequalities in political power describe the unequal access of individuals and groups to political institutions and decision-making processes.¹¹ Even in democracies, where all citizens should have equal political power by law, political inequalities can be significant. Differences in political power are linked to both wealth and income inequality. Economically powerful lobbying organizations and wealthy individuals often have better access to elected politicians and candidates, which they can use to shape policies in their favor and further entrench their advantage in other contexts.¹² Additionally, those who are economically better off are more likely to have the time and resources to run for office, as opposed to people from disadvantaged backgrounds.¹³ This interaction between different forms of vertical inequality, subsequently, leads to economically disadvantaged groups and their interests being underrepresented in political debates.¹⁴

Political Inequality: Working-class Representation in the OECD



Interpretation: More than half of all workers in the labor force in the OECD hold working-class occupations, but only 5% of lawmakers held a working class occupation when they were first elected. Data on legislatures (lower house or unitary) is for the years 2016–2018. For the definition of working class see the source Lupu et al.¹⁵

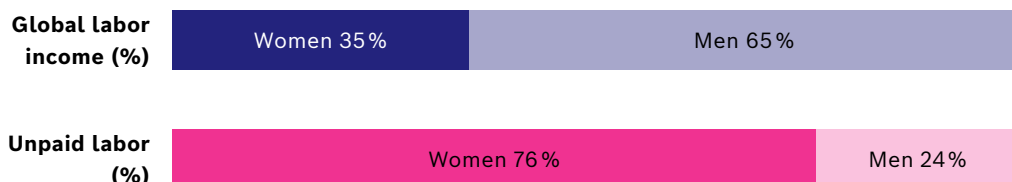
Horizontal Inequalities

Horizontal inequalities describe **differences between social groups**, which are formed around markers and categories by which people are classified or self-identify. People experience privilege and exclusion (discrimination) on both an interpersonal and institutional level based on these characteristics, leading to differences in socio-economic status (see vertical inequalities above). Three central dimensions of vertical inequalities are listed below, but many other important markers along which horizontal inequalities can be observed exist: These include religion, caste, class, education, and more.

Gender and/or sex

Gendered inequalities concern both gender identity, based on one's personal sense of self, as well as the biological sex one is assigned at birth, which is often based on external physical characteristics including genitalia. These characteristics are major sources of discrimination all around the world. Overall, this discrimination primarily affects those who are not seen as male. Gendered stereotypes, sexism and misogyny are widespread and work against the equal provision of opportunities, rights, and resources for women, as well as non-binary, intersex, and trans people. One example is the gendered division of unpaid and under-recognized care work, including: looking after children and the elderly, organizing the household, and fetching water. In all regions across the world, women spend significantly more time on care activities than men. On average, women work more overall hours,¹⁶ but fewer hours in paid employment, than men, resulting in a lower share of the total income.

Inequality by Gender: Income and Unpaid Labor (global)

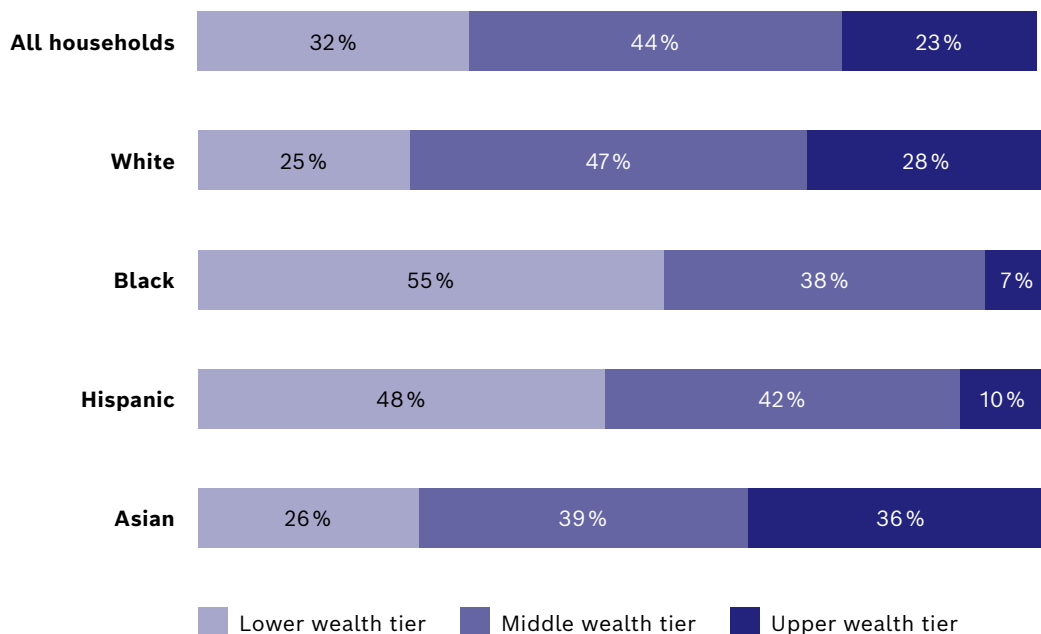


Interpretation: Women's earnings are significantly lower than their share in the global population. The amount of unpaid labor is much higher than their share. Data for women's earnings is for 2021 and from the WID 2022.¹⁷ Data for women's share in unpaid labor is for 2018 and by the ILO.¹⁸ Both sources only list male and female and have not included other gender identities.

Ethnicity and/or race

Ethnic and/or racial minorities are subject to discrimination in many societies. This is generally the case for groups considered to be different from the dominant group based on factors like phenotype (observable physical characteristics like skin color, facial features or hair texture) and cultural practices (like religious practices or traditional clothing). In many European and North American contexts, ethnic and racial discrimination affects groups and individuals perceived as non-white, including people of color, indigenous people, and migrant communities, as well as other ethnic minorities like Roma and Sinti people. Ethnic and racial discrimination can also affect majority-populations, like the Black population in South Africa, where the dominant group is a minority population. Ethnic and racial discrimination has historically been codified in laws including the right to property and employment. This has contributed to an entrenchment of economic inequalities along racial lines – often called the racial wealth gap. Although there is limited data on the racial wealth gap in Germany, some studies have shown a significant disparity in wealth between white Germans, non-white Germans and various immigrant groups.¹⁹

Inequality by Race: Racial Wealth Gap in the United States



Interpretation: In the United States wealth is unequally distributed between different racial groups/ethnicities. Those classified as black are especially overrepresented in the lowest wealth tier and underrepresented in the upper wealth tier. Due to rounding not all bars add to 100%. Households in the middle tier have wealth between one-quarter to four times the median U.S. wealth. Households grouped by the race and ethnicity of the survey reference person. Additional information is available in the source. Data is for 2021.²⁰

Disabilities

Disabled people face 'socially generated' inequalities that systematically disadvantage them from participating in social, economic and political life.²¹ People are naturally born with variations in functioning, including impairments to specific capabilities. These differences can be visible or invisible and concern physical, psychological, sensory, cognitive, or intellectual functioning, including as the result of long-term illness. Disabilities however, arise from the interaction between people with impairments (such as having limited vision or being legally blind) and attitudinal and environmental barriers that prevent them from participating fully, effectively and equally in society. For example, a lack of infrastructure for or consideration of people using white canes or guide dogs prevents them from being able to enter buildings independently or navigate effectively. Disabilities can be understood as the result of society's unwillingness to meet the differing needs of people, rather than being inherent to an individual's capabilities in themselves. This form of discrimination includes structural barriers (e.g. lack of accessible facilities), derogatory attitudes, and social exclusion, which can make it difficult to impossible for disabled people to participate in social, economic and political life. Discrimination contributes to the high levels of poverty and unemployment among disabled people.

Inequality by (Dis)ability: Unemployment and Poverty Risk in the EU

Youth unemployment rate in the EU (%)

8.6% — Among all young people (%)

17.7% — Among disabled young people (%)

Risk of poverty or social exclusion (%)

18% — Among all groups (%)

28.8% — Among people with disabilities (%)

Interpretation: According to EU Data young people aged 20–26 with a disability in the EU are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed compared to their peers without a disability. And nearly every third person with a disability is at the risk of poverty or social exclusion. For more details on the concepts see source.²²

Horizontal inequalities are connected with the concept of **inequality of opportunity**. This concept looks at factors beyond an individual's control and is concerned with the unequal prospects for personal development as well as economic and social participation that individuals in society face.²³ It is widely acknowledged that life does not start on a level playing field. Whereas some win the “lottery of life” and start with many advantages and privileges, the reverse applies to others.²⁴ For example, the simple fact of where, when and into which family one is born, clearly something no-one can choose, crucially shapes our opportunities in life: our citizenship; our access to education or health services; our ability to move (freely) across borders; our ability to run for office. These structural advantages result from unequal access to material, cultural and societal resources at the outset of our lives (inequalities of opportunity) and, ultimately, influence outcomes as well.²⁵ The feedback-loop between inequalities of opportunity (horizontal) and inequalities of outcome (vertical) entrenches inequalities between societal groups and across generations. In this sense, inequalities of opportunity and outcome are inherently interrelated in much the same way that horizontal and vertical inequalities are interrelated.

Intersectionality: The Fabric of Inequalities

The dynamics of inequalities outlined above shape social, political, and economic life on a structural level, as well as our personal experiences. The interactions and overlap between various dimensions of inequality are often referred to as ‘intersectionality’. The term originates from social movements in the United States of America and was popularized by the Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. She described the particular discrimination that African American women face, being marginalized both because of their race and their gender at the same time. The racial discrimination they experience is distinct to that faced by African American men, because it is inherently shaped by their gender as well as their race. Similarly, their experiences of sexism and misogyny are distinct to those of White American women, because they are also inherently shaped by racial discrimination. Intersectionality as a concept, thus, recognizes the multidimensional aspects of inequalities and the interconnectedness of different forms of discrimination. It analyzes the role, function, and impact of power structures on discrimination and privilege.

In relation to vertical and horizontal inequalities, intersectionality can be used as a framework to understand how different dimensions of inequalities are held together. If we imagine inequalities as vertical and horizontal

threads woven together, they establish a “social fabric” of privilege and discrimination. Where these ‘threads’ of inequality overlap, we can see multiple systems of disadvantage taking effect. This represents the experiences of individuals and groups at the intersections of these forms of inequalities. At these points of intersection, inequalities build on top of each other, thickening the social fabric of disadvantage. As the number of intersecting threads (inequalities) increases, the fabric becomes increasingly tough and inflexible. For those of us standing at these intersections, it becomes progressively harder to shape the fabric for ourselves and lead a self-determined life. As such, these dimensions of inequality should be understood not only as single threads but rather be taken as part of a broader fabric of multiple, overlapping systems of inequality, which shape social, economic, political, and cultural life.

The Fabric of Interwoven Inequalities



Once we understand the workings of inequality in political, social and economic systems, we can begin to challenge, overcome, and change them. An intersectional perspective is, therefore, crucial for promoting solidarity, social justice, and fairness



Causes of Inequalities

Just as dimensions of inequality are multifaceted, so are the explanations of their causes, as well as which structures and practices maintain them.²⁶

Take the example of income inequality. An easy explanation would be that some people are simply more productive than others, either due to talent or effort. If an individual produces more of a good or a service that they can sell to others or if the services or goods they provide are of higher use or value in society, they earn more from their work. Differences in income or wealth are widely seen as acceptable if they result from differences in effort. This concept, often called ‘meritocracy’, underpins much of the traditional thinking on inequalities of outcome: differences in effort, rather than factors beyond one’s control, legitimize differences in outcomes.²⁷


However, the concept of meritocracy does not adequately address the fact that the factors that determine our ability to be highly productive and reap the rewards are distributed very unequally.²⁸ For example, unequal access to quality education and the means of production (such as machinery, land, or public infrastructure) results in differences in income, irrespective of individual effort. Hence, weak and potentially discriminatory institutions (e.g. non-equitable education systems), unequal endowments (e.g. two farmers with very different soil quality or weather conditions), as well as the failure to provide good public infrastructure (e.g. roads or digital connectivity) produce inequalities that cannot be mitigated by individual effort alone. With regards to wealth inequalities, the story is not much different.

A historical study of income and tax data over hundreds of years shows that larger fortunes grow faster than small or modest savings as well as the economy as a whole.²⁹

Furthermore, much of today’s wealth is inherited. In Germany, around half of the 400 billion EUR of wealth inherited each year,³⁰ went to the top 10% of households.³¹ Moreover, the largest inheritances are often taxed at lower rates than medium sized inheritances or exempted from taxation altogether.³²

These examples indicate that policies in many areas, including education and other services, public infrastructure, tax and financial systems, can play a fundamental role in addressing inequalities.³³ However, policy only forms part of the solution to growing inequalities. Many inequalities today have deep historical legacies.

Three significant elements are discussed below: care work, colonialism, and the distribution of natural resources. They exemplify cases in which certain groups and their labor were deemed less valuable than others and were, subsequently, excluded from their fair share of the gains of economic activity. While the focus here is on the economy, the impacts of these legacies go well beyond the economic sphere and reach into the foundations of social and political life. Indeed, deeply rooted socio-cultural narratives further perpetuate discrimination beyond explicit structures and institutions.



Narratives, institutions, structures, and individual behavior further the exclusion of individuals, groups, and communities and continue to work against equal social, economic and political participation.

Care



Globally, women – or those who identify as and/or are perceived as such – work more hours per week than men. However, a much larger share of this work is unpaid.³⁴ Much of this difference arises from social stereotyping of women as primary caregivers. Raising children, cooking, cleaning, and caring for the elderly often falls under this unpaid work.³⁵ The difference made between paid “productive” employment and unpaid “reproductive” labor contributes to persistent income differences between men and women. Policies like the implementation of high-quality care services for children and the elderly can contribute significantly to reducing this gap and the burden of unpaid care work. Where such services are lacking, poorer women typically have fewer opportunities to spend time in paid work. Women on higher incomes, on the other hand, can privately organize childcare and spend more time in paid work. This further increases the income gap between richer and poorer families.³⁶ The prevalence of unpaid care work among women further restrains their societal participation beyond the economic sphere. Their additional responsibilities limit their time for other pursuits, including political and social participation. Thus, the societal impact of gendered care work on inequalities spans across

economic, social, and political spheres. A more equal distribution of care work is needed to redress this imbalance, not only between private households and publicly provided services, but also within households themselves (between women and men). Dismantling the underlying narratives around gender and care is, therefore, crucial for lasting change.

Colonialism

The legacies of colonialism play a fundamental role in the large differences in income and wealth between countries in the Global South³⁷ and the richest countries in the Global North. For centuries, colonial powers, especially in Europe, have exploited colonized regions and their inhabitants for resources, labor, and markets.³⁸ This has created enduring disparities and disproportionately expanded their wealth and influence. During colonization, imperial powers disrupted existing trading routes and established exploitative trading relationships with their colonial territories to favor their own economic interests.³⁹ Indentured servitude and slavery, maintained by state-sanctioned violence, were used to transform colonies into suppliers of cheap raw materials and labor.⁴⁰ Furthermore, colonizing powers often destroyed indigenous forms of knowledge and production, including by eradicating native species of plants and animals to solidify dependence on colonial chains of production. The legacies of those actions and the entrenchment of unequal trading relationships have shaped the economies of formerly colonized and colonizing regions even post-independence.⁴¹

The massive quantities of wealth generated during the colonial period have remained concentrated in Europe and North America for generations,⁴² and form a substantial basis of the wealth gap between the Global North and South today.

Beyond its economic impacts, the European colonial project was based on racist, pseudo-scientific concepts of eugenics and racial hierarchy used to legitimize the enslavement of and violence against colonized peoples.⁴³ Non-European societies and individuals were portrayed as inherently inferior to European ones and these ideas have persisted in both formerly colonized and colonizing regions, even after the official end of colonization.⁴⁴ The continuing discrimination facing historically colonized racial and ethnic groups is clear evidence of this, such as the significant levels of reported

anti-Black racism in Germany and other parts of Europe.⁴⁵ Racist discrimination has been shown to influence outcomes in all aspects of social, political, and economic life and its underlying ideas must be dismantled to achieve social justice.

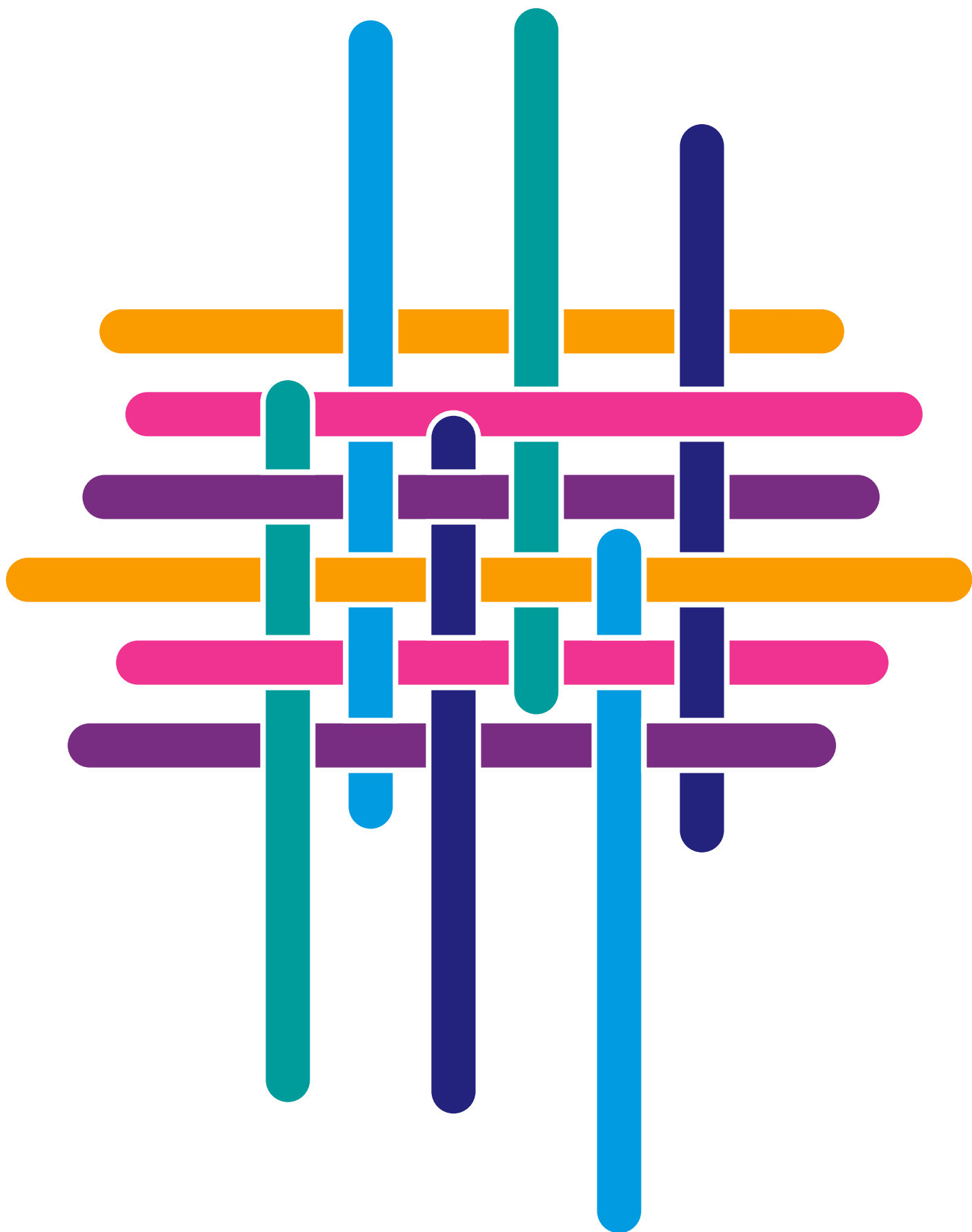
Natural Resources

Inequalities are also shaped by the use and distribution of natural resources such as land and water. Land and the benefits it yields have been enclosed and turned into private property for individuals and handed down within families for centuries.⁴⁶ The notion of private property in natural resources extends so far that owners even have the right to destroy what they call theirs: exploiting a water source until it runs dry, or leaving behind devastated and polluted landscapes in the search for fossil fuels, coal, and minerals.⁴⁷

Natural reproduction cycles, not unlike the care work of human reproduction, are typically treated as inputs into the economy that are free of costs.

In these models, natural reproduction cycles neither have a price, nor a recognized economic value.⁴⁸ They are, subsequently, severely over-used and under-protected. One example is the earth's atmosphere. It is, so far, unowned and, thus, is one of the few remaining global commons.⁴⁹ However, some groups, corporations and individuals pollute the atmosphere at a cost to others. In 2019, the top 10 % of global earners were responsible for 48 % of global greenhouse gas emissions.⁵⁰ At the same time, this section of the world's population, which is mostly concentrated in the Global North, has the best means to insulate itself from the consequences of climate change. At the other end of the spectrum, and side of the globe, are people with low incomes in the Global South. This group makes up 91 % of those affected by weather and climate-related disasters.⁵¹ Even within most industrialized nations in the Global North, the poorest half of the population is estimated to already live within agreed carbon budgets, whilst being more exposed to climate hazards. It is, therefore, primarily the rich within and across countries that overuse atmospheric and natural resources.

If inequalities are to be reversed sustainably, realizing the equal dignity of all people, as well as recognizing the fundamental role of care work and natural resources in the economy are essential.



Consequences of Inequalities

There is a wealth of literature on the negative effects of inequality, but this is a rather recent phenomenon. Until the early 2000s, much of economic theory did not consider economic inequalities critically.⁵² The work of Simon Kuznets in the 1950s, for example, saw income inequality as a passing phase in the process of becoming a richer nation, under which redistributive pressures and the availability of new technologies would eventually lead to greater equality in the long run. The benefits of inequality for competition and innovation were deemed greater than its associated costs. Today, the negative impacts of inequalities on everyone, except perhaps the top 0.1 %, are widely recognized in academia⁵³ and politics. The Group of Twenty (G20), i. e. the 20 strongest economies, emphasized in 2024 that

“Wealth and income inequalities are undermining economic growth and social cohesion by aggravating social vulnerabilities.”⁵⁴

There are good reasons why all individuals, whether they occupy a more privileged or marginalized position in society, should care about rising inequalities.

- **Personal development/self-realization:** In unequal societies, unequal access to resources and opportunities prevents all individuals from being able to develop their full potential. This not only violates our right to individual freedom and personal development but also hurts the economy as a whole as much talent remains undiscovered.
- **Health:** Inequality has a distinctly negative impact on a population's health. Rates of anxiety, depression, and physical illness, as well as violence and crime, are significantly higher in more unequal societies.⁵⁵ This correlation has also been observed in Germany.⁵⁶ The negative social consequences of inequality predominantly affect social groups that are disproportionately affected by inequality, such as women, ethnic minorities, migrants, and people with low incomes.⁵⁷ Ultimately, however, research demonstrates that these social disadvantages impact all members of society.⁵⁸

- **Social Mobility:** In unequal societies social mobility tends to be lower.⁵⁹ If parents want better chances for their kids, more equal societies are better at delivering them.

There are also broader, societal disadvantages to inequality. Indeed, some deem inequality to be the most acute of all global challenges due to its knock-on effects on trust, social cohesion and collective action.

- **Trust in democracy and civil institutions:** Inequality is correlated with falling trust in democratic institutions. In Germany, public trust in central democratic institutions and actors such as political parties and politicians is declining.⁶⁰ However, the loss of trust is much larger among people living in poverty, whose level of trust in institutions is 24 percentage points lower than amongst the wealthy.⁶¹
- **Social Cohesion:** Increasing economic inequality is correlated with a decrease in overall social cohesion in societies.⁶²

Economic inequality has the strongest influence on the level of trust between individuals in a population compared to other factors.

People in more unequal societies are more dismissive of groups they perceive as ‘other’, and high-income inequality can contribute to the development of a segregated and more polarized population.⁶³ Conversely, countries with higher levels of social trust are those that favor redistributive policies and are generally more economically equal.⁶⁴

- **Populism and polarization:** Support for populist parties is growing parallel to rising economic inequality. Income and wealth distribution that are perceived as unfair, i. e. are based on predetermined factors, like place of birth, the socio-economic status of one’s parents, or ethnicity, increases the tendency to vote for populist parties.⁶⁵ Even more than the distribution of income and wealth, the perception of not being able to leave the socio-economic class into which one was born through personal effort, influences the preference for populist parties.⁶⁶

These negative consequences are significant in themselves, but they also massively impact our collective ability to problem-solve. Indeed, the Club of Rome considers reducing inequality to be the most urgent political measure influencing our capacity to act in the face of contemporary crises.⁶⁷



Fighting Inequality

Considering all its negative effects, why has inequality remained so stable? Where have we seen progress and how can inequalities be reduced?

Of particular interest for research and practice in democracies globally is the question of why inequalities remain high, when one could expect popular electoral pressure to reverse this trend, given their negative impact on large parts of the (voting) population.⁶⁸ Whether policies for redistribution can successfully be pursued is shaped by the power of actors and networks that seek change. The institutional context of these policies, which can be constraining or empowering, also plays a role, as well as the discourses and narratives that shape people's understandings of policy.⁶⁹ An understanding of the systemic nature of inequalities recognizes the constraints that structures and systems impose on all actors – no matter whether they are privileged or face discrimination.⁷⁰ Such structures can hardly be changed by individuals, but history has repeatedly shown collective action to be a significantly effective tool.

In the Robert Bosch Stiftung's understanding, inequalities and their persistence ultimately boil down questions of power: the power to access resources and decision-making; to shape discourses; and to change the laws and practices that uphold inequality.

In its work on inequalities, the Foundation mostly works with civil society actors that challenge engrained inequalities. One way is through its support for movements that strengthen the collective power of people disproportionately affected by structural disadvantages. These communities are globally diverse, as exclusionary structures and processes can vary across different contexts and groups. This includes but is not limited to people of color, those belonging to migrant and refugee communities, women, individuals with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, disabled people, and individuals from low-income backgrounds, as well as those at the intersections of these groups. The Robert Bosch Stiftung also aims to strengthen the role of these groups in directly shaping practices and solutions for fighting inequalities. It promotes a process of recognition, representation, and (re) distribution, all three of which are essential for achieving social justice.

The 3R of Social Justice



Interpretation: The “3R”, recognition, representation and redistribution, are interlinked and are all needed to achieve social justice. Illustration by Doro Spiro.

Recognition: Recognizing persons with first-hand experience of inequalities as equals, as well as experts in their own right, due to the knowledge and expertise they have gained from lived experience of inequalities.

Representation: Establishing self-representation by people with lived experiences of inequalities and strengthening their self-organization to ensure their meaningful participation in decisions that affect them.

Redistribution: Ensuring just access to resources and opportunities for communities that have been historically and currently underprivileged.

Through strengthened self-representation of marginalized groups and more inclusive policy processes, the Robert Bosch Stiftung aims to support effective strategies for reducing inequalities, developed in coordination with those directly affected. These policies will produce outputs leading to a fairer distribution of resources and opportunities.

Ultimately, the fight against inequalities is as multifaceted as their dimensions, causes and consequences themselves. The Robert Bosch Stiftung therefore supports a great variety of actors engaged in different methods of combatting inequalities. The activities and strategies supported range from advocacy, capacity building, community organizing, education, legal strategies, lobbying, mobilizing, movement building, research and much more. About two-thirds of the work of the team Inequality has been international and one-third was dedicated to work in Germany. Here are a few examples of the work supported:

- The ↗ **Fight Inequality Alliance** aims to break the cycle of extreme concentration of power and wealth. They tackle inequality by influencing policies, the narratives that drive them, and the balance of power and voice in each society. The organization's approach is to build power from below and create a movement that promotes solidarity between people across borders. Over the next ten years, the Alliance aims to mobilize 50 million people from the grassroots to redefine what happens in the corridors of power around the world.
- The ↗ **Women in Migration Network** (WIMN) strengthens the voice of women and other people with diverse gender, whose lives have been impacted by migration and displacement, in the international migration governance processes. The secretariat of WIMN creates a space for its members and coordinates activities for the network. In addition, WIMN is in contact with decision-makers and actively involved in migration governance and women's rights international spaces.

WIMN holds workshops and webinars, led by persons with lived experience of migration and inequality, and raises awareness regarding intersectionality in migration politics. WIMN's strategy on feminist migration policy is an on-going bottom-up process through participatory consultations that are taking place in different international spaces.

- The ↗ **Disability Rights Advocacy Fund** (DRAF) and its sister-fund, the Disability Rights Fund (DRF), support organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to advance the recognition of their rights as set forth in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as inclusive development as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals. The Funds provide financial and technical resources to organizations of persons with disabilities in Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Caribbean. DRF/DRAF contribute to the reduction of inequalities through strengthening disability rights and by including leadership from persons with disabilities across their work.
- ↗ **Collective Abundance** strives for a just and reparative redistribution of wealth to promote collective empowerment among those tackling the root causes of the climate crisis and its repercussions. The collective addresses the difficult barriers faced by grassroots climate justice organizers in Europe when seeking access to philanthropic funding. They pursue three interconnected strands of work in an attempt to overcome these obstacles.
- The ↗ **Kiezprojekt** (neighborhood project) in Berlin aims to empower tenants to know their rights and demand a say in the handling of the housing crisis. Using community organizing methods, tenants in specific neighborhoods with large housing stocks are supported to build strong communities together and take collective action. In this way the project seeks to contribute to finding a solution to the social and ecological housing crisis.
- ↗ **Wirtschaft ist Care e.V.** (Economy is Care) sees itself as part of the global movement for a care-centered economy. The organization supports this movement through networking and public relations work as well as its own projects. The project focuses on presenting and recognizing the care movement in the DACH region as an important player in the socio-ecological transformation.

More information on the work of the Foundation in the field of inequality and the work of its fantastic partners can be found here:

↗ **www.bosch-stiftung.de/en/**

Endnotes & Literature

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