www.unece.org/we_do_we_need_gender_statistics.html

Gender statistics are needed to provide an evidence base for research and policy development. Gender statistics have an important role in improving the whole statistical system, pushing it to describe more accurately and fully the activities and characteristics of the whole population, which is made of women and men.

Social and economic policies are affected by gender dimensions even when it is not immediately obvious. The availability of the evidence base to support gender analysis is important to the investigation, since without an understanding of the differences in the operation and effects of the policy on different population groups, such as on women and men, the full implications of the policy may not be understood and its objectives may not be fulfilled.

At the international level, a series of United Nations intergovernmental resolutions provide a mandate for the development of policies on the advancement of women and gender equality, as well as for the statistics required for the development of these policies. These include the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979, the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Millennium Declaration (UN, 2000), adopted by all Member States of the United Nations in 2000.

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide a framework for measuring progress towards fulfilling the commitments of the Millennium Declaration. Goal 3 explicitly calls for gender equality and the empowerment of women, with the associated indicators relating to education, employment and decision-making. However, ensuring gender equality is essential for achieving all the other goals and countries are asked to provide sex-disaggregated data wherever applicable when reporting on progress.

Finally, gender statistics has also the role of improving statistical systems. In order to better describe reality and avoid unwanted biases, statisticians are continuously pushed to improve definitions and data collection methods. In the process of making official statistics more gender-sensitive, national statistical offices have the possibility to improve by:

starting new data collections (for example surveys on time use or on violence against women)
reviewing definitions
improving data collection (wording of questions, sample designs, interviewer effect)
improving presentation and dissemination of results.

For further information see Developing Gender Statistics: a Practical Tool, Chapter 2 (2010).