

Women in the workforce and in science, engineering and technology: the contribution of family-friendly policies

Seminar presentation:

OECD workshop on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology,
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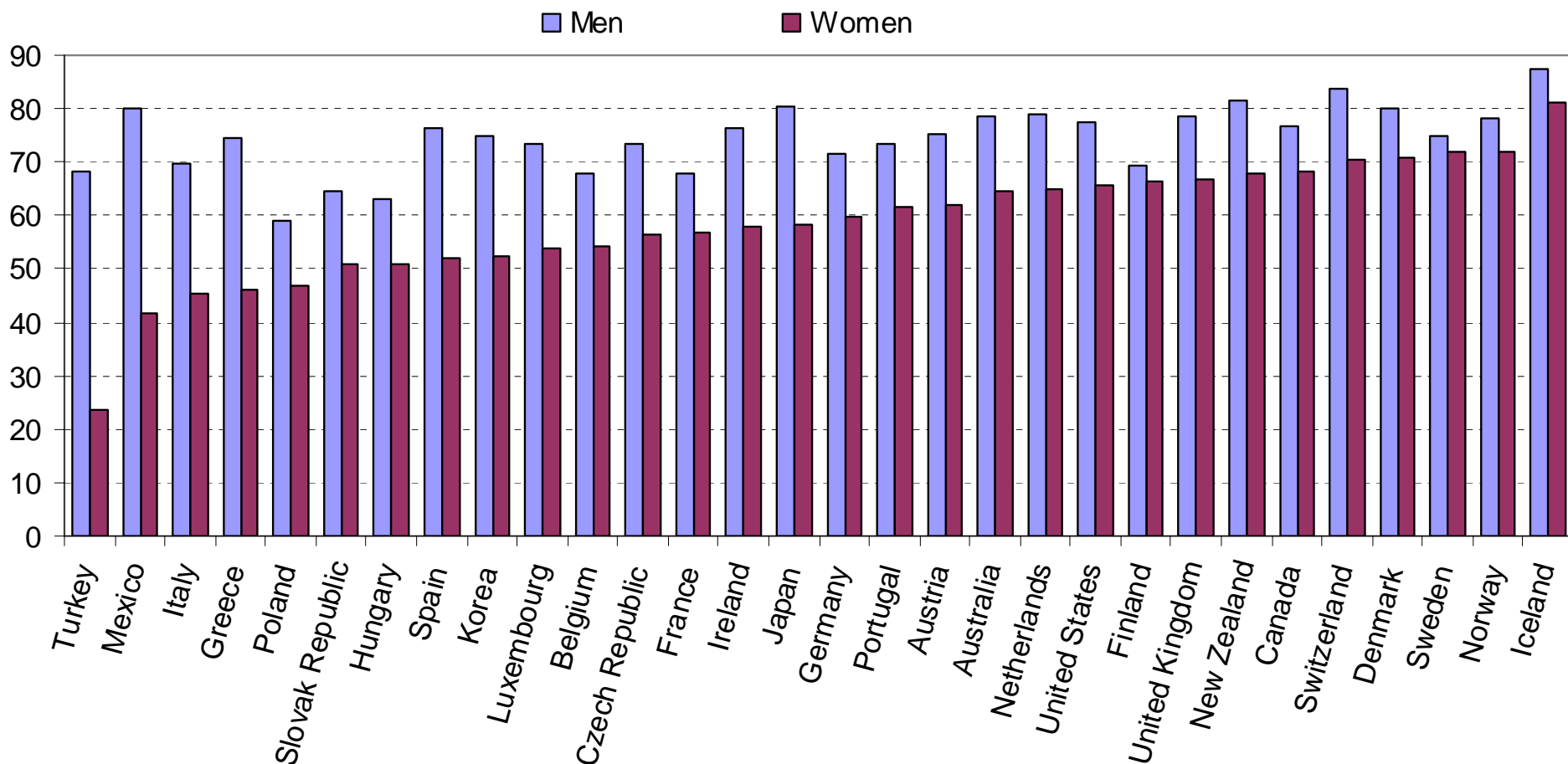
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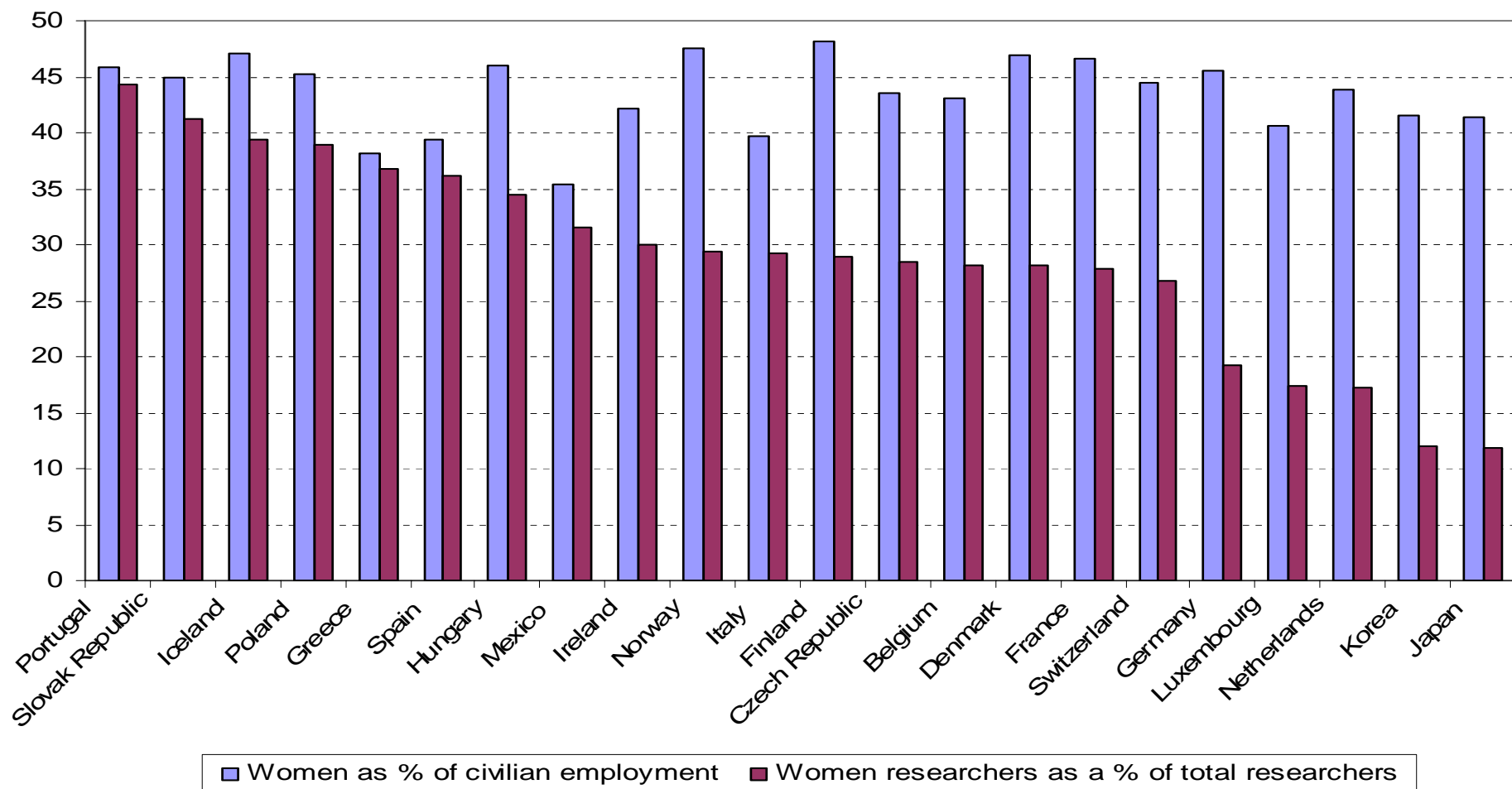
Two sets of issues affect the representation of women in science

- General factors affecting the participation of women in the work force, e.g.:
 - Tax and benefit systems
 - Workplace practices
 - Access to childcare
- Factors related to science, engineering and technology, e.g.:
 - Career paths
 - Workplace practices
 - Performance measures

The share of women in employment lags that of men, particularly in some OECD countries (ratio of employment to working age population, 2005)

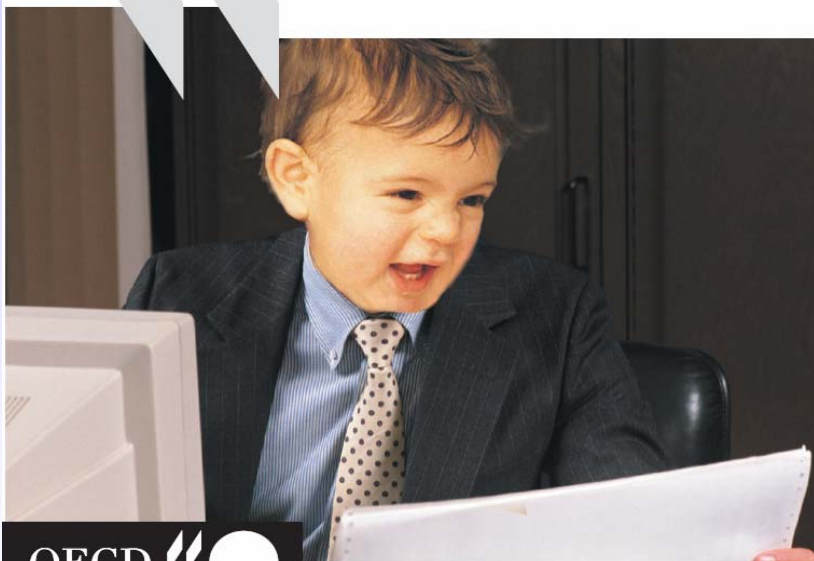


In most OECD countries, women are even more underrepresented in research careers (share of women in employment and in total researchers, 2004)



Babies and Bosses

RECONCILING WORK
AND FAMILY LIFE



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OECD PUBLISHING

Volume 4
Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom

OECD work on family-friendly policies:

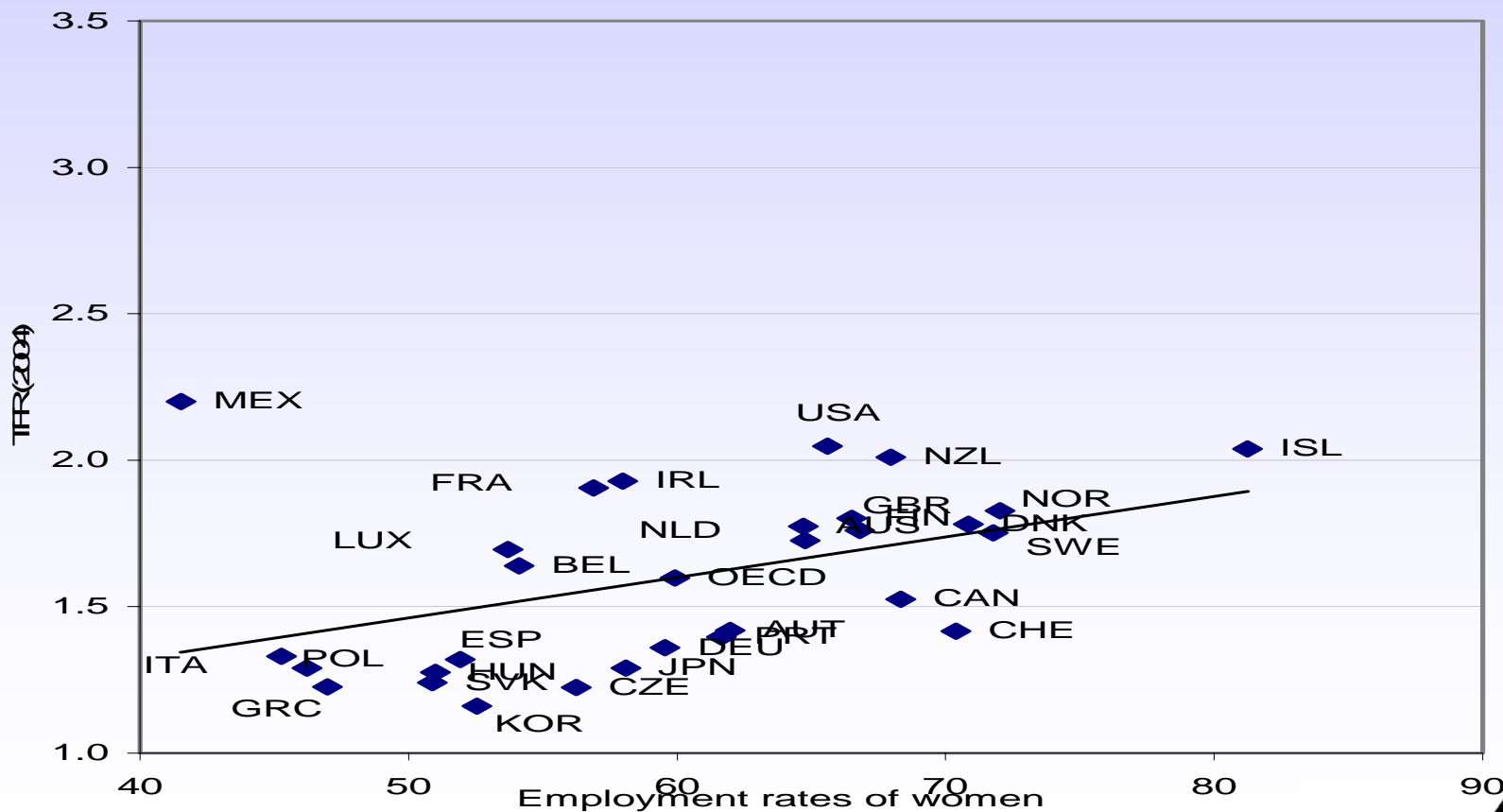
- *Babies and Bosses* addresses the factors that affect parental work and care choices, e.g. childcare, tax/benefit policies and workplace practices
- The reviews cover 13 countries in 4 volumes: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Why are policy makers interested in a better reconciliation of work and family life?

- Fertility concerns
- Increasing female employment to sustain economic growth and pension systems
- Tackling child poverty and promoting child development
- Gender equity

Countries with high female employment rates also have the highest fertility rates

Female employment population rates, 2005

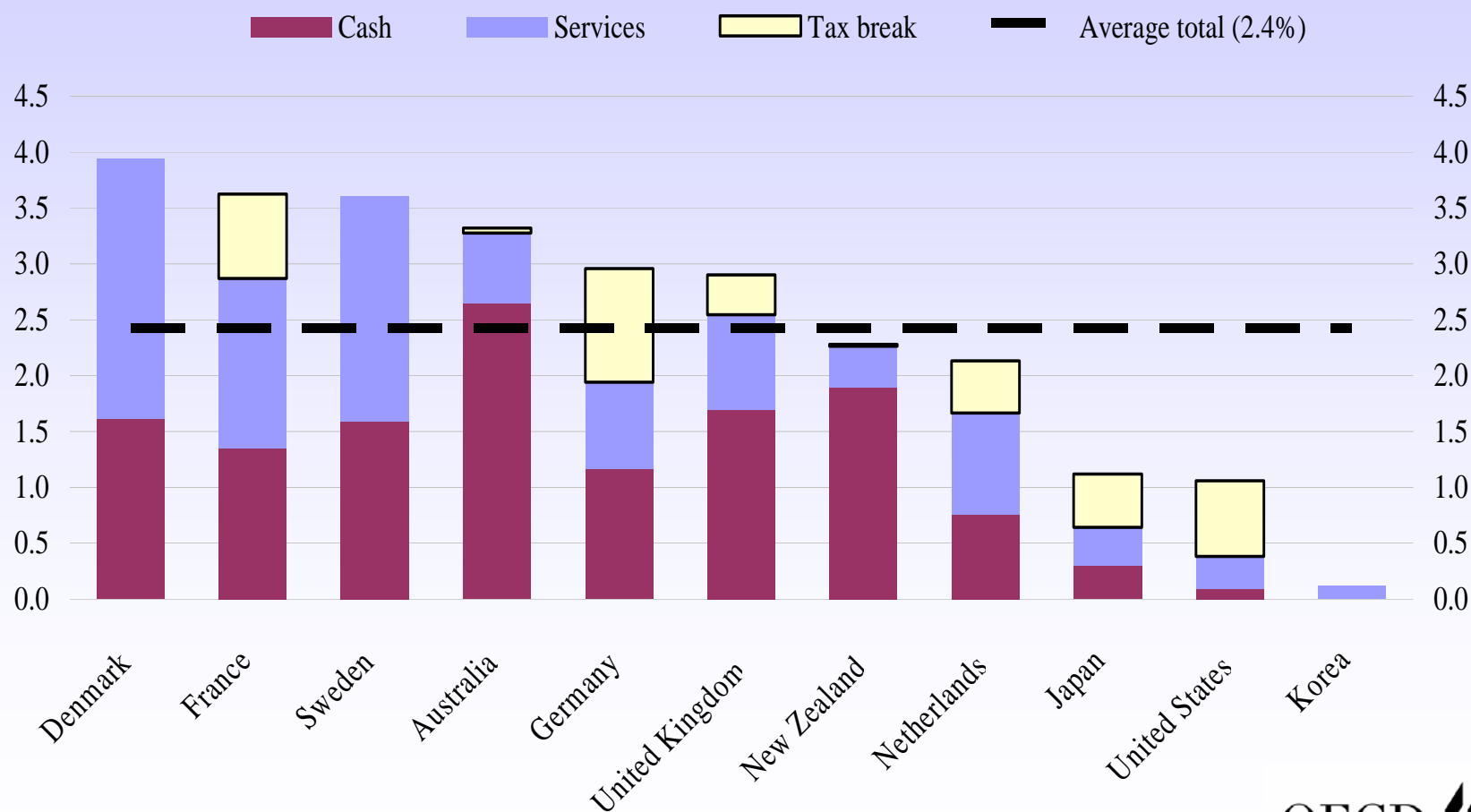


What are policy tools?

- Non-earmarked financial support for families
- Child and out-of-school hours care support
- Does work pay after paying childcare fees?
- How can the workplace become more conducive to female and maternal employment and careers?

Family spending in Denmark, Sweden and France is high and has a work-family focus.

Public spending on family support, percentage of GDP, 2003



Investment in family-friendly policies pays off through increased labour supply and child development

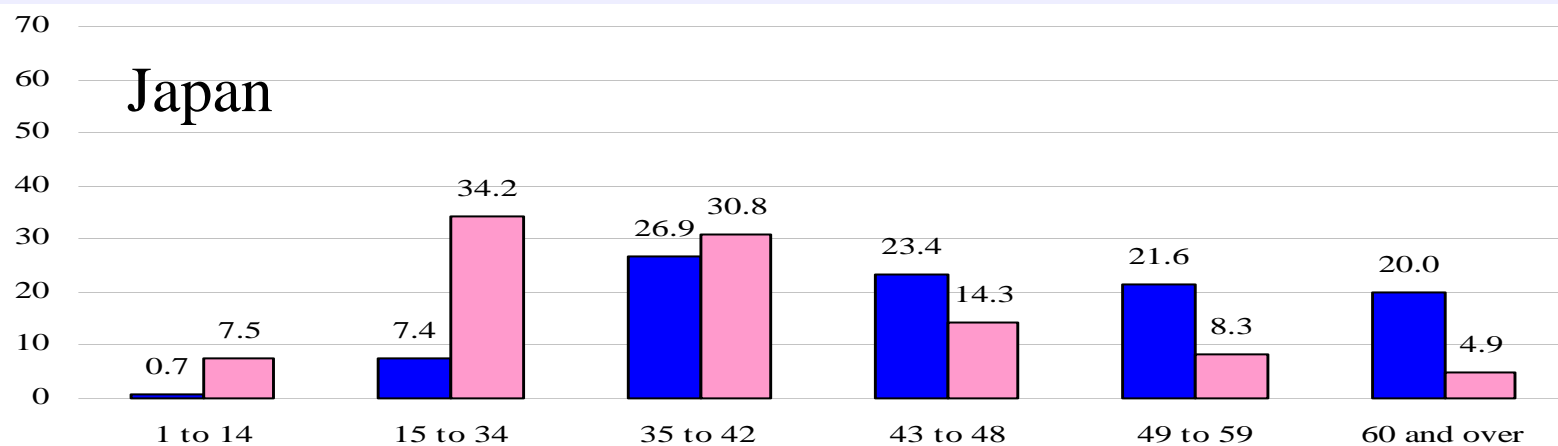
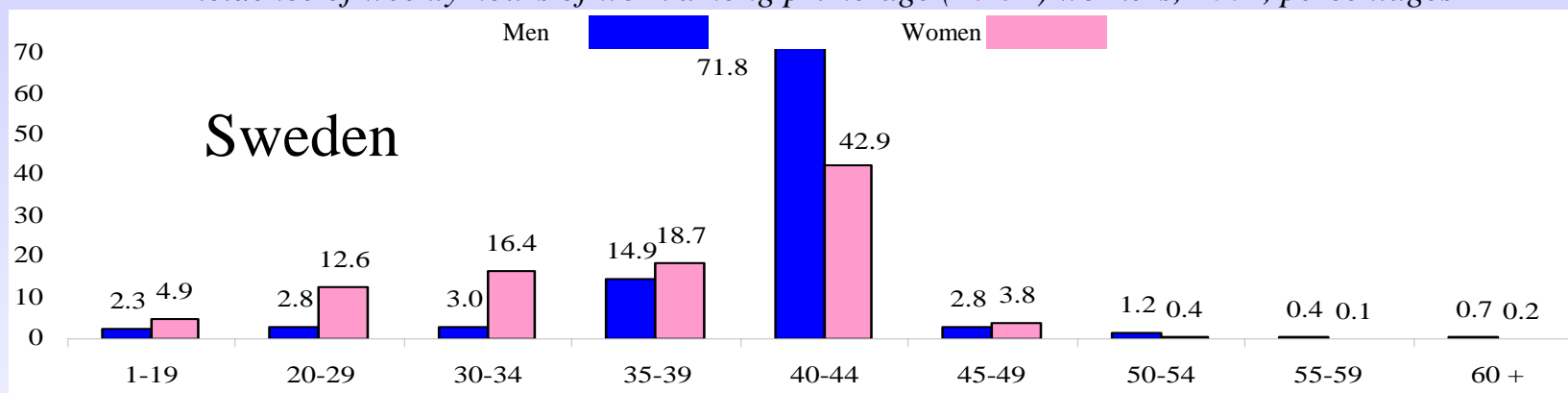
- Available estimates for Canada and Switzerland show high rates of return on childcare investment
- Target public support first at low-income families as return on investment is potentially very high. For example, half of the costs of the UK *HeadStart* programme are recouped before children leave primary school, and in the long-run the programme pays for itself

Workplace practices in some countries may make it difficult for mothers to have a career

- Women perceive they have to choose between work and children; difficult to have both
- Investment in human resources goes to waste
- Many employers do not (yet) see the need to make their workplaces more family-friendly, and employment conditions therefore remain unfavourable to women and mothers

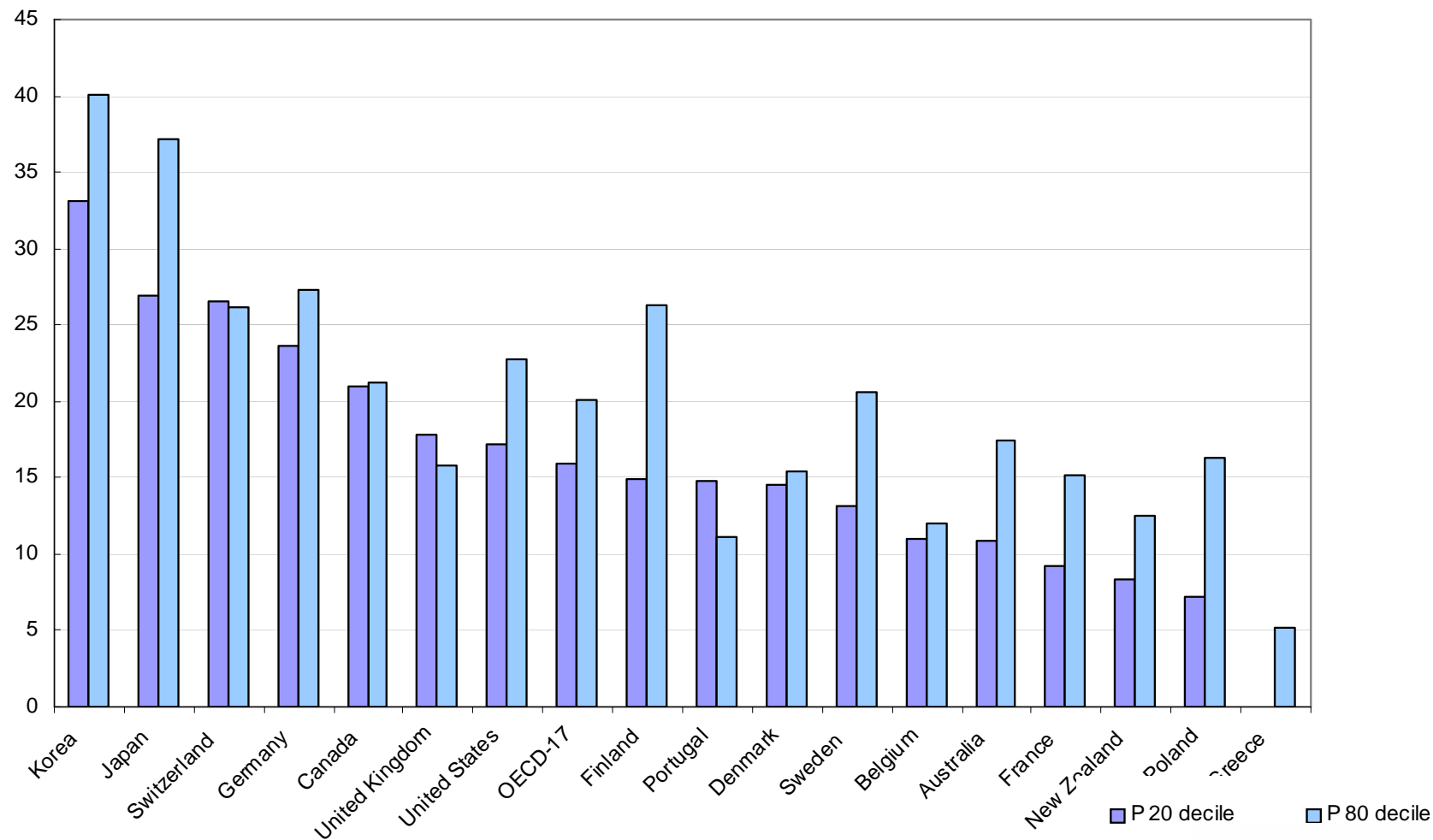
Long working hours make combining work and care commitments difficult for both mothers and fathers

Incidence of weekly hours of work among prime-age (20-54) workers, 2002, percentages



Gender wage gaps are high in some OECD countries

Gender earning gap for full-time employees at bottom (20%) and high earning levels (80%), 2003 or latest year available



Future development of family-friendly policies

Investing in families through building a continuum of work and care supports includes different elements:

- Building a ‘continuum of supports’
- Ensure a sufficient supply of quality childcare places
- Promote gender equity, for example by reducing the financial bias against work for spouses
- Help reduce duality in the labour market

Workplaces could do a lot more...

- Reduce barriers to regular employment for mothers returning to work
- Encourage the use of family-friendly policy measures (incl. leave) in the workplace
- Strengthen the role of performance in earnings and career decisions
- Promote gender equity and avoid investment in human capital going to waste

Family-friendly policies also affect the representation of women in SET

- Balancing work and family life may be more complicated in research as long leave tends to affect research careers.
- Workplace practices in SET can be a problem.

In sum:

- Policies to foster a greater presence of women in science, engineering and technology are likely to be most effective if they can build on comprehensive family-friendly policies.
- In addition, policies to address specific barriers in science, engineering and technology can reinforce broader family-friendly policies.

For more details on the OECD work on
family-friendly policies:

(www.oecd.org/els/social/familyfriendly)