The Pursuit of Gender Equality
AN UPHILL BATTLE

FOREWORD, EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CHAPTER 1

Gender inequalities persist in all areas of social and economic life and across countries. Young women in OECD countries generally obtain more years of schooling than young men, but women are less likely than men to engage in paid work. Gaps widen with age, as motherhood typically has marked negative effects on gender pay gaps and career advancement. Women are also less likely to be entrepreneurs, and are underrepresented in private and public leadership positions.

The 2013 and 2015 OECD Gender Recommendations provide guidance on how to advance gender equality in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life; this book discusses recent developments in these areas in one overview chapter and 24 short chapters which each include key findings and policy recommendations. Topics include violence against women, gender budgeting, the unequal sharing of unpaid work, labour market outcomes and migration. The book presents a range of indicators illustrating gender gaps. It also discusses recent policy initiatives, such as pay transparency measures to reduce gender wage gaps and policy reform aimed at fathers taking parental leave. Overall, progress has been slow and there is a strong need for further policy action to close gender gaps in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life.

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The Pursuit of Gender Equality

AN UPHILL BATTLE
Foreword

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right. It is also a keystone of a prosperous, modern economy that provides sustainable inclusive growth. Gender equality is essential for ensuring that men and women can contribute fully at home, at work and in public life, for the betterment of societies and economies at large.

The OECD has long championed this cause. In 2010, building on its extensive work, the OECD launched the OECD Gender Initiative to examine the obstacles to gender equality in the fields of education, employment and entrepreneurship. This work led to the flagship 2012 publication *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now!* and an extensive work stream assessing policies to promote gender equality in different countries. These country reviews have informed novel policy initiatives like *NiñaSTEM PUEDEN*, which the OECD and the Mexican Ministry of Education jointly launched. The OECD’s online Gender Data Portal has become a leading global source for statistical indicators on female education, employment, entrepreneurship, political participation, and social and economic outcomes.

The OECD’s strong focus on gender equality, in collaboration with other international organisations, has been crucial for raising the profile of the gender agenda internationally and securing strong commitments by G20 and G7 leaders. In particular, the OECD was instrumental in advancing the G20 target to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation rates between men and women by 25% by 2025.

The 2013 OECD Gender Recommendation and the 2015 OECD Gender Recommendation in Public Life propose concrete measures that member countries and other adherents can implement to advance gender equality. The present report, *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, represents the OECD’s stocktaking of how well – or not – countries are doing in implementing policy measures aimed at reaching gender equality goals. Despite the OECD’s analysis, policy recommendations and international targets, countries need to do more.

This report presents a stark call to action. In the past five years, countries have made very little progress in reaching gender equality goals. Gender gaps persist in all areas of social and economic life and across countries, and the size of these gaps has often changed little. While young women in OECD countries now obtain more years of schooling than young men, on average, girls are much less likely to study in the lucrative science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. Women’s labour force participation rates have moved closer to men’s rates over the past few decades, but in every OECD country women are still less likely than men to engage in paid work. When women do work, they are more likely to work part-time, are less likely to advance to management, are more likely to face discrimination and earn less than men. The median full-time female worker earns almost 15% less than her male counterpart, on average, across the OECD – a rate that has barely changed since 2010. Women also remain underrepresented in political and business leadership positions.

Countries are, however, making progress in some key policy areas:
Several countries now offer strong financial incentives to fathers to take parental leave for at least two months. Fathers’ leave taking is essential for gender equality in paid and unpaid work, as it encourages parents to share caregiving more equally and facilitates mothers’ labour market participation. These egalitarian behaviours can improve father’s and mother’s well-being, set a good example for children, and – over time – are likely to lessen prevailing gender stereotypes.

Gender pay gaps persist worldwide, despite women’s dramatic gains in education. Many factors drive the gender pay gap, including gender segregation in fields of study and jobs, women’s higher likelihood of interrupting their careers for caregiving, and – though harder to identify – discrimination and biases against women. Since 2013, about two-thirds of OECD countries have introduced new pay equity initiatives and pay transparency is a key lever in bringing gender pay differentials within companies to light.

Gender quotas and other targets are helping to increase the number of women in political and private sector leadership. Women’s underrepresentation in leadership limits the presence of female voices in important decisions, and deprives girls and young women of strong role models. Changing stereotypes requires a broad, societal understanding that women are capable of achieving as much as men in business and in public life.

Harassment and violence against women (VAW) represent the worst manifestation of gender inequality, but VAW remains endemic in much of the world. A survey conducted for this report finds that addressing VAW is a top priority issue for most OECD countries, and governments and stakeholders are increasingly strengthening legislation and conducting awareness-raising campaigns aimed at preventing and ending VAW. Yet progress remains slow and uneven. This is a crucial front in the uphill battle for gender equality.

These inequalities should have long been resolved. There is no reason for women to trail behind men in social, economic and political outcomes. The cost of inaction is high: reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25% by 2025 could, through increases in the size of their labour forces, add 1 percentage point to projected baseline GDP growth across the OECD over the period 2013-25, and almost 2.5 percentage points if gender participation gaps were halved by 2025. In the face of sluggish growth, ageing societies and increasing educational attainment of young women, the economic case for gender equality is clear.

We must advance in making gender equality a reality.

The OECD Gender Recommendations help motivate governments, employers, families and schools around the globe to close gender gaps, empower girls and women, and promote gender equality. Every country faces its own obstacles to reaching gender equality, and to make a real difference we must change public policies in tandem with stereotypes, attitudes and behaviours. Together, we can ensure that boys and girls, and men and women, have equal opportunities to succeed and contribute to their society and economy.

Angel Gurría
Secretary-General of the OECD
Executive summary

Gender inequality pervades all aspects of social and economic life, and affects countries at all levels of development. Young women in OECD countries now often obtain more schooling than young men, but women continue to be poorly represented in the lucrative science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. The number of women in the labour force has moved closer to that of men in the past few decades, but in every country women are still less likely to engage in paid work.

When women do enter the labour force, they are more likely to work part-time, they are less likely to advance to management and they earn less than men. The median full-time female worker earns almost 15% less than her male counterpart, on average, across the OECD – a rate that has changed little in the past decade. Women are less likely to be entrepreneurs, and female-owned businesses tend to earn less than male-owned ones. Across countries, gender gaps increase with age, reflecting the crucial role that parenthood plays in gender equality. Much more than fatherhood, motherhood typically has marked negative effects on workforce participation, pay and career advancement. Gender inequalities pervade public life, as well: women are underrepresented in political office, holding less than one-third of seats in lower houses of national legislatures, on average, in the OECD.

Clearly much remains to be done to narrow – and eventually close – gender gaps worldwide. In a survey carried out for this report, countries identified the three most important gender inequality issues in their country as violence against women, the gender wage gap and the unequal sharing of unpaid work. Motivated by these and other inequalities, as well as 2013 and 2015 OECD Gender Recommendations, countries have made some important policy changes in the past five years:

- Most OECD countries are tackling workplace harassment, a form of violence against women, through stronger laws and regulations governing sexual harassment. Information or awareness-raising campaigns aimed at defining and preventing sexual harassment are commonly used. More research is needed to understand whether (and how well) such programmes work.

- Several countries have initiated programmes aimed at getting girls and young women into STEM and encouraging more young men to study and work in health and education.

- About two-thirds of countries have introduced specific policies to close the gender wage gap. Pay transparency is a key lever; companies are increasingly required to analyse gender wage gaps and share the results publicly.

- Access to early childhood education and care is crucial for gender equality, as it helps both mothers and fathers work when children are young. Several OECD countries recently addressed affordability through increases in subsidies, benefits or rebates, the introduction or expansion of free childcare hours and/or more direct public investment in new facilities for young children.
• A majority of OECD countries have initiated policies that promote gender balance on boards and in senior management. Countries that adopted a quota saw a more immediate increase in the number of women on boards, while those that took a “softer” approach, using disclosure rules or targets, have seen a more gradual increase over time.

• Many OECD countries have implemented affirmative action measures to move more women into public leadership. More women have entered high-level political office as a result of mandatory quotas requiring a minimum number of women elected or quotas compelling parties to nominate a certain ratio of female/male candidates.

• In an effort to get parents to share caregiving more equally, many countries now provide fathers with financial incentives to take parental leave for at least two months. This is important, as fathers’ equal participation in caregiving is crucial for ensuring that mothers can remain and advance in the labour force.

• Many countries are trying to close gender gaps in access to finance and entrepreneurial skills by improving access to bank financing through loan guarantees. Two other common strategies are the use of public procurement to support female entrepreneurs and efforts to improve women’s access to risk capital. Entrepreneurship training, mentoring programmes, workshops, business counselling and support in building entrepreneurial networks have also shown promise.

• For gender equality to be fully realised, gender equality must be embedded in all policy making, in all ministries and at all levels of government. Gender budgeting is an increasingly common tool for ensuring that women’s and girls’ concerns are mainstreamed in policy and public administration, and almost half of OECD countries report that they have introduced, plan to introduce, or are actively considering introducing gender budgeting.

• The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Agenda 2030’s gender-dedicated goal and targets (SDG5), promises to increase the prioritisation of gender equality in national and global development agendas.

Despite these promising policy measures, progress has been far too slow so far. There has been little change in outcomes on the ground. Gender gaps stubbornly persist in educational, social, economic and political outcomes. These inequalities must be urgently addressed.

Countries must step up their efforts through sustained campaigns, monitoring policies aimed at gender equality, greater public investment, and the introduction and expansion of legal measures. The policy suggestions in this report, combined with the OECD Gender Recommendations, should serve as a toolkit for policy makers and stakeholders willing to tackle gender inequality. The time is now to ensure that better policies lead to better lives – for girls and boys, and for women and men.
## Chapter 1

Gender equality in the OECD and around the world: An overview

### Key findings

- **Girls and young women now outpace boys and young men in educational attainment, on average, in OECD countries. Yet gender gaps in employment, entrepreneurship and public life persist, and gaps have changed little in recent years. Public policies are not doing enough to end these inequalities.**

- **Government priorities have been shifting, reflecting heightened awareness of certain policy challenges. Over half of countries surveyed identify violence against women as one of their three most urgent gender inequality issues. Other urgent issues include women being paid less than men for the same work and the unequal sharing of household tasks between men and women.**

- **Some public policies have improved dramatically in the past five years. In many countries, the increasing availability of paid paternity leave is helping to ensure that fathers and mothers have an equal stake in caregiving, thus reducing barriers to women’s labour force participation. Since 2013, approximately two-thirds of OECD countries have introduced pay transparency measures to address wage inequities. Countries are increasingly implementing and strengthening policies aimed at violence against women, which remains endemic worldwide. Affirmative action measures are successfully helping to increase the number of women in public and private senior leadership.**

- **Despite progress in these and other policy areas, gender gaps persist. All countries must urgently implement and strengthen policies aimed at gender equality, for the betterment of women, men, girls, boys and society as a whole. The policy advice presented in this report and embedded in the OECD Gender Recommendations serve as tools for tackling this challenge.**

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The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.
Gender equality for inclusive growth

As this report details, gender gaps persist in all areas of social and economic life, and in countries at all levels of development. There has been very little progress over the past five years. Young women in OECD countries now often obtain more schooling than young men, but continue to be less likely to study in the lucrative science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields. Women’s labour force participation rates have moved closer to men’s over the past few decades, but in every country women are still less likely than men to engage in paid work. When women do work, they are more likely to work part-time, are less likely to become managers, are less likely to be entrepreneurs and earn less than men. The median full-time female worker earns just under 15% less than her male counterpart, on average, across the OECD (Table 1.1) – a rate that has barely moved in recent years (Figure 1.3). Women are also underrepresented in private sector management and in politics, holding, on average, fewer than one-third of lower house seats in national legislatures in the OECD. On the whole, however, gender gaps are largest in private sector employment and entrepreneurship.

Girls’ remarkable progress in educational attainment worldwide is perhaps the greatest gender equality success story of the past half-century (OECD, 2012). Yet it will take more time before changes in young women’s educational profiles translate into narrower gender gaps in labour markets. Indeed, existing gaps in labour market outcomes of prime age and older workers continue to be influenced by education and career decisions that they made 20 to 40 years ago, when societal norms and career expectations were different. Further policy action is needed – immediately – to ensure that girls’ and young women’s gains translate into gender equality throughout the life cycle. Gender gaps often emerge around the time of parenthood, when more traditional gender norms around work and life take hold in families.

There is cause for optimism, however. Even if socioeconomic outcomes have changed slowly on the ground, countries have made good progress in some policy areas in the past half-decade, particularly in paternity and parental leave, reducing the gender wage gap, addressing violence against women and promoting women in leadership.

Getting fathers to take leave from work when children are young is important for equality, as fathers’ unpaid caregiving is key for ensuring that mothers have the option to fully participate in the labour market, in society and the economy. Over half of OECD countries now offer paid paternity leave for at least a few days around childbirth, and more and more are reserving a parental leave period that only fathers can use (Chapter 16). Gender issues are intrinsically linked with family-friendly policies – around paid leave, care supports and flexible workplace arrangements – that help both men and women achieve a better work-life balance and greater well-being.

To fight the gender wage gap, approximately two-thirds of OECD countries introduced new policies on pay equity since 2013. Pay transparency is a key tool, and companies are increasingly required to analyse gender wage gaps and share that information publicly. Other countries are trying new strategies, like online pay gap calculators or certifications for companies showing good practice (Chapter 12).

Governments are also recognising violence against women (VAW) as a priority area and taking steps to prevent and eradicate it (Chapter 5). For example, many countries have introduced or reinforced anti-harassment laws. Others are conducting awareness-raising campaigns about definitions of sexual harassment, ways to prevent sexual harassment and legal rights (for victims) and obligations (for employers) when harassment occurs. To ensure that women are represented in decision making, many OECD and developing countries have initiated some form of affirmative action to increase female representation in politics (Chapter 14).
## Table 1.1. Countries where women do well in education have the smallest gender gaps in labour force participation and leadership positions

Key indicators of gender gaps in education, employment and entrepreneurship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group:</th>
<th>15-year-olds</th>
<th>25-34 year-olds</th>
<th>15-64 year-olds</th>
<th>All ages</th>
<th>Top performers</th>
<th>Moderate performers</th>
<th>Bottom performers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note:</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD average a</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD std. dev.</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
<td>-23.1</td>
<td>-15.5</td>
<td>-11.9</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>-15.6</td>
<td>-10.9</td>
<td>-7.3</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>-15.0</td>
<td>-10.9</td>
<td>-5.0</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>-23.4</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>36.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>-39.1</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>-19.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>-26.1</td>
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<td>9.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Countries are ranked in ascending order according to the gender gap in the labour force participation rate. Values are shaded according to the size of the gender gap relative to the OECD average and the OECD standard deviation. “Top performers” are those with gender gaps more than half a standard deviation below the OECD average (i.e. those with smaller gender gaps or gender gaps that more strongly favour women), “moderate performers” those with gender gaps within half a standard deviation of the OECD average, and “bottom performers” those with gender gaps more than half a standard deviation above the OECD average (i.e. those with larger gender gaps or gender gaps that more strongly favour men). “(p.p.)” denotes a gender gap measured in percentage points; “(%)” denotes a gender gap measured in percentage terms. For the gender gaps in mean PISA reading and mathematics scores, countries marked with an * are those where the gender gap is statistically significant. Data for “China” refer to the four PISA-participating China provinces (Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Guangdong) only.

For notes a to g and sources, please see the online StatLink.
In the past five years, these national programmes and campaigns have been strengthened by important international commitments to gender equality. The OECD and other intergovernmental organisations were instrumental in bringing gender equality to the fore of the G20 agenda, including the 2014 commitment by G20 leaders to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation by 25% by 2025. The OECD also supported the creation of Women20 (W20), which promotes women’s economic empowerment as an integral part of the G20 process. At the G7, the OECD and other organisations have made important inroads in promoting women’s entrepreneurship and getting more girls into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects – an issue which the OECD is also directly addressing through its NiñaSTEM PUEDEN joint initiative with the Mexican Ministry of Education. And, of course, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – particularly the gender-dedicated goal and targets in SDG5 – have helped to increase the prominence of gender equality within national and global agendas.

No country in the world has achieved gender equality. Even the most egalitarian continue to experience troubling gaps between men’s and women’s (and girls’ and boys’) aspirations, opportunities and outcomes. Such inequality is not only a moral failure, but a serious barrier to inclusive economic growth – to the detriment of society as a whole. Achieving equality between women and men requires a holistic, whole-of-government approach in which all stakeholders prioritise gender equality as an integral part of the design, implementation and evaluation phases of public policies and budgets.

The OECD has long championed gender equality (e.g. OECD, 1980 and 1985). Building on its extensive work, the OECD through its 2010 launch of the OECD Gender Initiative strengthened its focus on the obstacles to gender equality in the fields of education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life. The detailed policy suggestions in this report, combined with the OECD Gender Recommendations (OECD, 2013 and 2015a), should serve as a toolkit for policy makers and stakeholders willing to tackle gender inequality.

Gender gaps in labour market outcomes persist, despite girls and young women’s gains in education

Although many countries have achieved gender parity in access to primary and secondary education, there is wide regional variation. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, fewer girls than boys still enrol in primary school (Chapter 6). In OECD countries, girls and young women now typically outperform boys and young men in reading proficiency and are more likely to complete their university education (Figure 1.1). In 2014 across the OECD, 57% of bachelor’s and master’s degrees were obtained by women. Yet, despite the gains they have in many areas of education, teenage girls across the OECD state that they are less satisfied with life than teenage boys (Chapter 6 and OECD, 2017a).

Gender stereotyping and perceptions of ability, rather than actual ability (OECD, 2015b), contribute to gender gaps in proficiency and participation in STEM fields (Figure 1.1 and Chapter 8). The fields of study (and subsequent career paths) of boys and girls start to diverge by the age of 15. OECD-wide, 15-year-old boys are, on average, more than twice as likely as girls to expect to work as engineers, scientists or architects. In higher education, young women are under-represented in STEM; for example, women account for less than 20% of entrants into tertiary-level computer science programmes in OECD countries and only around 18% of engineering entrants (Chapter 7).
Figure 1.1. Young women are better educated than young men, but less likely to choose to study science, mathematics or computing at university level

Panel A. Gender gap (male minus female) in the share of the population that has attained tertiary education, 25-34 year-olds, 2015 or latest available year

Panel B. Female share (%) of tertiary graduates in science, mathematics and computing, 2014 or latest available year

Note: For Panel A, countries are sorted from left to right in descending order according to the gender gap (male minus female) in the share that have attained tertiary education. For Panel B, countries are sorted from left to right in ascending order according to the female share (%) of tertiary graduates in science, mathematics and computing.

“Tertiary education” includes all types of tertiary-level qualifications – i.e. short-cycle tertiary qualifications (Levels 5 of the International Standard Classification of Education 2011), bachelor or equivalent level qualifications (ISCED 2011 Level 6), master or equivalent level qualifications (ISCED 2011 level 7), and doctoral or equivalent level qualifications (ISCED 2011 level 8).

“Tertiary graduates in science, mathematics and computing” includes graduates from all types of tertiary-level programmes (ISCED 2011 levels 5 to 8) in the field of science, mathematics and computing.

a) Data for China refer to 2010, for Chile and Indonesia to 2013, and for Brazil, France and South Africa to 2014

b) Data for Belgium, Canada, Iceland, India and South Africa refer to 2013.

While female labour force participation rates have moved closer to men’s over the past few decades, women are still less likely to be in the workforce and often experience lower job quality across OECD countries. Migrant women face particularly daunting barriers; their employment rates are usually lower than those of native-born women and migrant men (Chapter 21). Women who do work are more likely to work part-time, for lower pay, and in less lucrative fields such as the public sector, health and education (Chapters 9 and 22), while higher proportions of their better paid male peers work in finance, banking and insurance (Chapter 11). Far more men than women work long hours in paid work (Figure 1.8), even though long hours do not imply greater productivity (OECD, 2017b). As long as men’s long hours are viewed as showing career commitment, and as long as women are more likely to take leave to care for children or relatives, some employers will be less inclined to invest in female employees.

Figure 1.2. Men are much more likely to spend more time at the workplace than women

Percentage of employed with usual weekly working hours equal to or greater than 60 hours per week, by gender, 2014 or latest available year\(^a\)

All of these factors contribute to substantial gender pay gaps, with median full-time female workers earning almost 15% less, on average, than their male peers OECD-wide (Figure 1.3). Although overall pay inequality has improved little in recent years, the good news is that gaps in participation and pay are narrowest among young men and women (Chapter 12). But gender-related labour market gaps widen when children enter the household, as couples then often take on more “traditional” gender roles. Gaps emerge earlier in countries where the average age at which women bear their first child is lower than the OECD average of 29 years (OECD Family Database) and where traditional attitudes to women’s role in the home are more prevalent (OECD, 2016a, 2016b and 2017c). After controlling for differences in observed worker and job characteristics and working hours, just over half of the gender gap in monthly pay remains unexplained in
OECD and G20 countries (Chapter 12). Attitudes, norms, social institutions, and discrimination are important factors, particularly in G20 countries where gaps are wide and women more likely to be unpaid family workers and/or engage in informal work (Chapters 19 and 20).

The quality of women’s jobs is often lower, as well. In countries with high levels of labour market informality, women are frequently overrepresented in informal jobs. These jobs offer little social protection, high job insecurity, and (often) low pay (OECD, 2016a and 2016b). Women also often hold lower-quality informal jobs. Employers and wage workers tend to fare better in job quality and pay, whereas own-account, domestic and family workers – a grouping in which women predominate – typically fare worse (OECD, 2017b).

Figure 1.3. Gender pay gaps have changed little across OECD and G20 countries and they remain substantial

Gender gap in median monthly earnings, full-time employees, 2010 and 2015 or latest available year

Note: The gender gap in median monthly earnings is defined as the difference between male and female median monthly earnings divided by male median monthly earnings, for full-time employees. Full-time employees are defined as those individuals with usual weekly working hours equal to or greater than 30 hours per week.

a) Data refer to weekly earnings for Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States, and to hourly wages for Denmark, Greece, Iceland, New Zealand, Portugal and Spain.

b) Data refer to 2014, not 2015, for Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey. They refer to 2013 for Sweden, 2012 for India and South Africa, and 2011 for Israel. Data refer to 2011, not 2010, for Brazil, Chile and Costa Rica.

Source: OECD Employment Database (http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecddeploymentdatabase.htm) for OECD countries, Colombia and Costa Rica; and OECD Secretariat calculations based on the Encuesta Permanente de Hogares (EPH) for Argentina, the Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílio (PNAD) for Brazil, the National Sample Survey (NSS) for India, the National Labour Force Survey (SAKERNAS) for Indonesia, and the General Household Survey (GHS) for South Africa.

StatLink: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933573829
In OECD countries with data available, and indeed throughout the world, women do far more unpaid work than men (Figure 1.4, OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database – GID-DB). On average in the OECD, women do the greatest share of unremunerated housework and childcare in Korea, Japan, Mexico, Portugal, Turkey and Italy, where women undertake more than three-quarters of all unpaid work. The gaps are typically even larger in developing countries, where inadequate access to time-saving infrastructure (e.g., water piped into the home) and technology (e.g., washing machines) increases the total time required for chores (OECD, 2017b). In India and Pakistan, for example, women spend around ten times as many hours on unpaid work as men (OECD Development Centre, 2014). Time trends suggest that, over time and across countries, women have gradually reduced the time they spend on unpaid work – in part due to time-saving technology – while men’s behaviours have changed little (OECD, 2017c).

Figure 1.4. Women do more work in total – paid and unpaid – than men in most OECD countries

Gender gap in minutes spent per day on paid and unpaid work, female minus male, 15-64 year-olds

Given that time is a finite resource, hours spent on unpaid work have negative effects on availability for paid work, and gender gaps in unpaid work hours correspond with gaps in paid working hours. In countries where unpaid work in the home is more equally shared, there also tend to be smaller gender-specific differences in hours spent in the workplace (Chapter 15).
Culture and norms play a significant role in defining gender roles, both at work and at home. Countries with a culture of long paid working hours tend to have correspondingly large gender differences in labour market behaviour and the sharing of unpaid care and housework. This is especially true in households with dependent children, though women are also the main providers of elderly care (Chapter 22). However, with more highly-educated women than men entering the marriage market, women are less likely to partner with better-educated men. Nowadays, women often live with men educated at similar levels, while those who are highly educated tend more and more to partner “downwards”. The least eligible partners, who risk being left on the sidelines, are poorly-educated men.

Opinions of working mothers have grown more favourable, albeit slowly, particularly in countries where the government has increased public support to help parents combine work and family commitments. Men, too – especially the highly-educated – are increasingly involved in parenting activities. Nevertheless, even when both partners work full-time, the division of household labour is rarely a 50-50 split. Women tend to do less unpaid housework or childcare as their share of household earnings rises, but the relationship is not linear. There is some evidence that high-earning women often do more housework in order to conform to gender norms at home, if not in the workplace – an example of so-called “doing gender” behaviour (Bertrand et al., 2015).

Women’s lower labour force participation, their higher likelihood of interrupting their careers to care for family members, and their higher incidence of part-time work (Chapter 18), together with other, less tangible factors – including discrimination – all affect the number of women who advance to senior positions (Chapter 13). There remains a thick glass ceiling in both public and in private sectors. In 2016, women accounted for 33% of senior management positions in central government, even though they made up 52% of all central government employees. In the private sector in 2016, women occupied only one in five seats on the boards of publicly listed companies, up slightly from a rate of 16.8% in 2013. Women held only 4.8% of chief executive officer positions in 2016, though this was double their share in 2013 (Chapter 14).

Female entrepreneurs do not fare much better. Women are still much less likely to be self-employed than men, and are less likely than men to employ staff (Figure 1.5). Reflecting the size of their companies, the sectors in which women operate, and a variety of other factors, self-employed women earn less than their male peers – at least a fifth less, in almost all OECD countries (Chapter 24 and OECD, 2017d).
Figure 1.5. Employed women are much less likely than employed men to be self-employed and have employees

Gender gap (male minus female) in the share of the employed who are employers, percentage points, 15-64 year-olds, 2016 or latest available year

Note: The share of the employed who are employers is the number of self-employed who have employees as a percentage of the total number of employed. To improve international comparability, the figures for Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States include the unincorporated and incorporated self-employed.

a) For Australia, Chile, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, the United States, and the OECD average, data refer to 2015.

b) Data for Australia, Chile, Israel and Korea refer to 15+ year-olds, and for the United States to 16-64 year-olds.


Priority issues and recent policy gains

A serious commitment to gender equality

The OECD has placed gender equality at the top of its agenda. It actively promotes the principles underlying the OECD Gender Recommendations (Box 1.1) as part and parcel of its strategic agenda to combat unequal income opportunities, as enshrined in its Inclusive Growth Initiative and the Secretary-General’s 21 for 21 Agenda. The 2013 OECD Gender Recommendation and the 2015 OECD Gender Recommendation in Public Life call on adherent countries to enhance gender equality in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life through legislation, policy, investment, monitoring and campaigns. Since 2013, many countries have prioritised gender equality in public policy. Yet gender gaps persist. All countries must step up their efforts to ensure that policies truly reflect – and result in – inclusive societies in which boys, girls, men and women can all reach their true potential.
Box 1.1. The OECD Gender Recommendations: Background to this report

The OECD Gender Recommendations are rooted in the OECD Gender Initiative, which started in 2010; the All on Board for Inclusive Growth initiative, launched in 2012; and the understanding that, despite existing policies, “significant gender disparities and biases nevertheless remain in educational and occupational choices; earning levels and working conditions; career progression; representation in decision-making positions; in public life; in the uptake of paid and unpaid work; in entrepreneurial activities; in access to finance for entrepreneurs; and in financial literacy and financial empowerment” (OECD, 2013).

The “Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship” – hereafter referred to as the 2013 Gender Recommendation – was adopted on 29 May 2013. It sets out a number of measures that OECD members and non-members (Colombia, Costa Rica, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and the Russian Federation) who adhered to it should consider implementing in order to address gender inequalities in education, employment and entrepreneurship (OECD, 2013). In particular, it recommends that adherents should – through appropriate legislation, policies, monitoring and campaigning – provide equal access to education, better enable female labour force participation, promote family-friendly policies, foster greater male uptake of unpaid work, work toward a better gender balance in positions of public and private sector leadership, and promote entrepreneurship among women. The 2013 Gender Recommendation also calls on adherents to draw up policy principles and guidelines and build good practices and data on gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship. It also issues a call to “further the Recommendation’s objectives through co-operation with all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, public agencies, trade unions, employers’ organisations and civil society”.

The 2013 Gender Recommendation inspired and informed the development of the Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life – hereafter the “2015 Gender Recommendation in Public Life” – which was adopted by the Council on 14 December 2015 (OECD, 2015a). It focuses on effective governance and the implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming measures in public life, as well as on enhancing women’s equal access to public leadership opportunities in parliament, government, the judiciary and the civil service.

The OECD Gender Recommendations require regular reporting on progress in their implementation. This report is an elaboration of the 2017 progress report to the OECD Council (OECD, 2017e). It draws on the indicators in the OECD Gender Data Portal and the wide range of ongoing OECD gender work (OECD Gender Data Portal), including analysis of and data on education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life; OECD Regional Initiatives on Governance and Competitiveness (including in MENA countries); the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET); the OECD Development Centre’s Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI); financial education, health, science, access to justice and equality before the law and taxation; and the OECD Better Life Index.

In 2016, in preparation for reporting on progress in implementing the OECD Gender Recommendations, various OECD Committees sent questionnaires on their respective focal areas of the Recommendation to adherent countries to seek their input on policy changes, announced policy changes or progress in implementing the Recommendations since their adoption. Such questionnaires – hereafter referred to as the “OECD Gender Equality Questionnaires” (OECD GEQs 2016) were sent to the Corporate Governance Committee (CGC) and its Working Party on State-Owned Enterprises and Privatisation Practices (WPSOPP); the Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (CSSP); the Education Policy Committee (EDPC); the Employment, labour and Social Affairs Committee (ELSAC); the Directing Committee for the Co-operative Action Programme on Local Employment and Economic Development (LEED); and the Working Party on SMEs and Entrepreneurship (WPSMEE). The International Network on Financial Education (INFE) launched a survey on financial literacy and financial inclusion and the Governing Board of the OECD Development Centre ran a consultation on gender issues and best practices. Responses to the questionnaires were assessed during the second part of 2016 and early 2017, and selected content is presented in this report.
The 2016 OECD Gender Equality Questionnaires (GEQs) asked countries to identify the three most urgent gender equality issues they face. The most widespread was violence against women – 21 of the 37 responding countries listed violence against women as one of their three most urgent issues (Figure 1.6). The second most common was “Women being paid less than men for the same work”, with 16 countries prioritising it. The third most pressing issue was the unequal sharing of household tasks, prioritised by 14 countries. Identifying urgent issues has resulted in important policy initiatives in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life.

**Figure 1.6. Priority issues in gender equality**

Number of adherent countries to the 2013 Gender Recommendation listing the following as one of the three most urgent gender equality issues needing to be addressed in their country

Note: 35 countries responded. Each country could select up to three priority issues.

Source: OECD Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee (ELSAC), Questionnaire on Progress in Implementing the 2013 Gender Recommendation.

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**Eliminating violence against women**

Violence against women (VAW) remains widespread. It is estimated that 35% of all women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence (WHO, 2013). OECD countries have increasingly prioritised sexual harassment and violence against women as a policy issue (Figure 1.6). Reflecting the 2013 Gender Recommendation’s call for intensified efforts to combat sexual harassment, in itself a form of VAW, new policy measures have typically taken one of two forms:

- new or stronger laws or regulations governing sexual harassment, or
- raising awareness and improving understanding of sexual harassment in order to prevent it.
Austria, Costa Rica, France, Iceland, Israel, Korea, Mexico, Portugal and Slovenia are among the adherent countries that introduced or reinforced anti-harassment laws. By contrast, the Russian Federation partially decriminalised domestic violence in 2017. Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Israel, Korea, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Portugal have all conducted, or are conducting, awareness-raising campaigns about what constitutes sexual harassment, ways to prevent it, and legal rights (for victims) and obligations (for employers) when harassment occurs. Other countries, like the Czech Republic and Sweden, have built sexual harassment into larger national strategies on gender equality or gender-based violence. Countries are also increasingly collecting data on harassment and VAW. They must strengthen those efforts, as large data gaps remain (Chapter 5).

**Combatting pay inequality**

Persistent gender pay gaps (Figure 1.3) have prompted about two-thirds of countries to introduce new equal pay policies since they adopted the 2013 Gender Recommendation. A key component of such polices is transparency on pay, and companies are increasingly required to analyse their gender wage gaps or disclose gender-disaggregated data on wages to employees, auditors and the public (Chapter 12). Since 2013, Australia, Japan, Germany, Lithuania, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom have implemented or proposed such measures. Other new strategies include the introduction of so-called “pay gap calculators” – often publicly available online, as in Australia – as well as certifications or awards for companies that show best practices in areas of gender equality such as equal pay. Such certifications or awards have been introduced in Costa Rica, Iceland, Latvia and Mexico.

**Bringing down barriers to female employment**

Female employment rates have increased by an average of almost 3 percentage points across the OECD since 2012. The gender employment gap remains at 11%, however, and OECD governments continue to consider how best to reduce barriers to employment. Figure 1.7 shows country responses to the OECD GEQ (2016) question “What are the three most effective ways to tackle barriers to female employment?”. The most common response, cited by 23 countries, was “making childcare more accessible”. The second most widespread, cited by 13 countries, was “making sure women earn the same as men for the same work”, while “increasing flexible work arrangements” and “improving women’s access to better quality jobs” were the joint third most popular policy measures, with 12 responses apiece. New and reinforced policy measures are needed to ensure that countries stay on the right track in meeting the G20 “25% by 2025” target, which sets the goal of reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25% by 2025 (Figure 1.10).
Figure 1.7. Country priority rankings: The most effective ways to remove barriers to female employment

Number of adherent countries to the 2013 Gender Recommendation listing the following as one of the three most effective ways to tackle barriers to female employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Response</th>
<th>Number of Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making childcare more accessible</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making sure women earn the same as men for the same work</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving women's access to better quality jobs</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing flexible work arrangements (e.g. part-time work, work from home)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving women's access to traditionally &quot;male&quot; jobs</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making it easier for women to combine paid work with unpaid work</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring that recruitment procedures do not discriminate</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making sure tax and benefits make it financially attractive for women to work</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making employers aware of the benefits of employing and promoting women</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving women's access to traditionally &quot;male&quot; jobs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 35 countries responded. Each country could select up to three policy responses.

Source: OECD Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee (ELSAC), Questionnaire on Progress in Implementing the 2013 Gender Recommendation.

Access to affordable childcare

Many OECD governments have introduced measures to improve access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) since the start of 2013 (Chapter 17). Several – such as Canada, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic and Poland – have taken steps to address affordability, usually through increases in subsidies or benefits/rebates for public childcare and, occasionally, through the introduction or expansion of free childcare (e.g. Norway and the United Kingdom).

Other strategies for improving ECEC access and attendance include the introduction of legal entitlements to places in childcare from a certain age and the lowering of compulsory attendance ages. Several countries have also increased public investment in new facilities, in most cases with an emphasis on places for children under 3 years old. Korea arguably undertook the most comprehensive reform of recent years. Its increases in public ECEC investment have more than tripled the share of children under age 6 enrolled in ECEC facilities since 2004 (OECD, 2017f).

Childcare needs do not stop when children enter primary school, however. School-age children’s participation in out-of-school-hours care remains low in many OECD countries (Chapter 17). Parents with school-age children may consequently struggle to work full-time and many mothers in OECD countries continue to work only part-time even as their children age.

Improving women’s access to private sector leadership

In accordance with the OECD Gender Recommendations, most OECD countries have initiated policies to promote gender balance on company boards and in senior management (Chapter 14). Countries that introduced quotas saw a more immediate increase in the
number of women on boards, while those that took a softer approach, such as voluntary
target setting and disclosure of existing gender outcomes in companies, have seen a more
gradual increase over time (Chapter 14). For example, the United Kingdom’s voluntary
business-led initiative lifted the share of women on boards from 13% in 2010 to 27% in
2016. Similarly, since they endorsed the OECD Gender Recommendation, Australia, Chile,
the Czech Republic, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Luxembourg and Switzerland initiated soft
targets to achieve gender balance on the boards of PLCs and/or state-owned enterprises
(SOEs). Australia and Chile – together with other countries like Finland, Spain and the
United Kingdom – started to include disclosure requirements in their corporate governance
codes and regulations compelling corporations to reveal the gender balance on their boards.

Since 2013, nine countries – Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy,
Israel and Norway – have introduced compulsory gender quotas for PLC and SOE board
membership. Finland, though it does not enshrine targets in law in its state-owned
enterprise sector, has a rule in its nomination practices that ensures at least 40%
representation of each gender. While quotas have boosted the number of women on boards,
the gains at the top have not been reflected below board level.

Growing the number of female entrepreneurs

Since approving the 2013 Gender Recommendation, most OECD countries have sought
to promote female entrepreneurship by narrowing gender gaps in access to finance and
entrepreneurial skills. One widely used strategy has been to improve access to bank
financing through loan guarantees, raising the ceiling of the amounts guaranteed and
making additional training and networking support available to beneficiaries. New loan
guarantee schemes tend to be more common in emerging economies, where banks are often
reluctant to lend to small and medium-sized enterprises and less sensitive to gender issues
or to the untapped market potential of women-owned businesses. One example is the
Caisse centrale de garantie in Morocco (Chapter 25). In OECD economies, the recent trend
has been to raise guarantee ceilings and make additional training and networking support
available to beneficiaries – as is the case with France’s Fonds de garantie pour la création,
la reprise, le développement d’entreprise à l’initiative des femmes (the guarantee fund for
women’s business creation, rescue and development).

Two other strategies gaining ground are the use of public procurement (targeting
government contracts to female-owned businesses) and efforts to improve women’s access
to risk capital. Many countries also seek to address gender gaps in entrepreneurship
awareness and entrepreneurial culture, networks and skills through, for example, training,
coaching, mentoring programmes, workshops, business counselling and support for

Towards a fairer representation of women in public life

In line with both OECD Gender Recommendations, most OECD countries have put in
place some form of gender quota action to increase female representation in politics, though
measures vary in extent and type – e.g. reserved seats quota, legal candidate quota, and
political parties’ voluntarily instituted quotas (Chapter 14). Of the 28 OECD countries with
available data in 2016, 24 had voluntary political party quotas, ten had legislated quotas in
their single or lower houses of parliament, ten had introduced quotas in their electoral law,
and three had gender quotas written in their constitution. Nevertheless, women are far from
parity with men in legislative bodies (Figure 1.8). They held, on average, only 28.7% of
legislative seats in OECD countries in 2016 (Chapter 14).
In other regions of the world – such as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – women are even less well represented in national legislatures. Only Tunisia and Algeria, where women hold over 30% of seats in parliament, exceed the OECD average. Progress in women’s political participation in MENA has been attributed chiefly to the introduction of quota provisions, adopted by political parties and incorporated into electoral law or, in some cases, into the constitution (Chapter 20).

**Affirmative action in public services**

There is low take-up in the civil service of measures which explicitly seek to enhance the recruitment of women and ensure that they enjoy equal opportunity in promotion and career advancement. According to 2016 data, the most common policy measure, which ten OECD countries reported using, is gender diversity hiring targets for women. But otherwise governments in only a few countries set gender targets for promotion, use preferential treatment in promotion, or use coaching programmes or information sessions targeted at women (Chapter 14). In a similar vein only a few countries have moved towards affirmative action in the judiciary to ensure gender-balanced representation (Chapter 14).

**Mainstreaming gender in policy making**

If gender equality is to be fully realised, a whole-of-government approach must be adopted. This approach must include the tools to deliver outcomes and mechanisms that ensure accountability, as emphasised in the 2015 Gender Recommendation in Public Life. To that end, gender equality should be built into all policy making in all ministries and all levels of government. In 2015, 25 OECD countries reported having introduced obligatory gender impact assessments when developing new legislation. Gender budgeting is an

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**Note:** Data refer to 1st December 2016. Countries marked with an asterisk (*) had legislated quotas (i.e. quotas implemented via the legislative process) in place in 2016.

**Source:** Inter-Parliamentary Union Women in National Parliaments Database, [http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm); Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) PARLINE Database, [http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlsearch.asp](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlsearch.asp); Quota Project Database, [http://www.quotaproject.org/](http://www.quotaproject.org/).

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**Figure 1.8. Women remain underrepresented in national legislatures in OECD countries**

Female share (%) of seats in parliaments, lower-house or single-chamber, 2016

![Graph showing women's representation in national legislatures in OECD countries](image-url)
increasingly used tool for bringing women’s and girls’ concerns into mainstream policy and public administration. Almost half of all OECD countries report that they have introduced, plan to introduce or are actively considering introducing gender budgeting. If countries’ gender budgeting approaches are to have the desired impact on gender equality, however, they:

- need gender-disaggregated data,
- should set specific, measurable, agreed-upon, realistic and time-based (SMART) targets,
- must standardise gender-responsive budget and policy routines,
- must conduct external gender audits, and
- their legislative bodies should monitor and evaluate gender-budgeting measures (Chapter 3).

For policy implementation to be effective, it is crucial to have clear and legitimately assigned roles and responsibilities for mainstreaming gender equality in public institutions (OECD, 2017b). A number of countries (e.g. Mexico and Canada) have recently taken steps to strengthen the role of centres of government in monitoring the inclusion of a gender perspective in all policies, along with central gender institutions, and to reinforce the role of central gender equality institutions with regard to gender mainstreaming (e.g. Chile and Sweden).

Countries must step up their efforts to make gender equality an integral part of the design, development, implementation and evaluation phases of public policies and budgets, while generating systematic evidence of the impacts of gender equality efforts on the ground.

Changing policies, changing minds: The persistence of stereotypes as a barrier to equality

Public attitudes towards the roles of men and women have changed slowly over time in the OECD (OECD, 2016a and 2017c). However, gender stereotyping at work, at home, and in society at large continues to be a serious obstacle to greater gender equality. The media, too, play an important role in cementing gender stereotypes. Media reflects and can normalise violence against women, “hegemonic masculinity”, and even sex trafficking, and women’s limited representation in media outlets – particularly at high levels – has negative implications for how girls and women are portrayed in entertainment and news (Montiel, 2014).

Gender stereotypes take hold early in life. Data from the OECD’s PISA educational assessments reveal that, by the time they are 15, boys and girls expect to pursue careers in stereotypically gender-specific fields, regardless of the subjects in which they are proficient (Chapter 7). Teenage girls seem less satisfied with life than teenage boys, but the reasons underlying this gender gap are not well understood (Chapter 6). OECD PISA also shows that many parents still harbour different expectations for their sons and daughters (OECD, 2015a). For example, in Chile, 50% of 15-year-old boys’ parents expected that they would work in areas related to science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM). Yet only 16% of girls’ parents hoped that their daughters would go on to careers in STEM-related fields. Policy makers are aware of the importance of gender stereotyping at school – perhaps nowhere more so than in Sweden, where the pre-school curriculum seeks to counteract traditional gender patterns and gender roles (Chapter 7).
Choosing STEM-related fields

Gender stereotyping and gendered expectations still drive educational choices even when the gender-equal policies and incentives are in place. STEM-related fields are highly lucrative, yet girls and young women are underrepresented in them (Figure 1.1). A number of countries, including Australia, the Flemish community in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, have introduced new measures or reinforced existing ones – aimed at parents, teachers and students – that address the issue of the under-representation of girls and other groups in STEM fields (Chapter 7). For example, in England, “Your Daughter’s Future” is an online guide for parents to help parents with school subjects and career choices, while “Opening Doors” provides good practice in countering gender stereotyping in schools for teachers and students. The OECD-Mexico initiative, NiñaSTEM PUEDEN, launched in early 2017 by the OECD and Mexico’s Secretariat of Public Education, invites Mexican women who have prominent careers in science and mathematics to act as mentors, visiting schools and encouraging girls to choose STEM subjects and be ambitious.

Stereotypes restrict the choices of both women and men. Men, for example, remain underrepresented in health care and education sectors. In the Netherlands, action to promote STEM careers among young women is accompanied by initiatives to draw men into the education sector (Chapter 9).

Promoting women’s financial literacy

Gender gaps in financial literacy also remain a barrier to women’s financial empowerment (Chapter 10). The 2015 financial literacy survey run by the OECD and its International Network on Financial Education (INFE) suggests that women have less financial knowledge than men in 19 of 30 participating countries and economies, with no significant gender disparities in the other countries and economies. Men also tend to be more financially resilient than women. Many countries have developed initiatives, such as financial education programmes, to improve women’s financial literacy, but more evidence is needed to determine the effect of such programmes on gender gaps.

Changing norms of masculinity

Reshaping gender stereotypes at home and in the workplace does not just require changing women’s behaviour. It requires changing men’s behaviour, too. Countries increasingly recognise that fathers’ participation in unpaid care and housework is critical to gender equality. In Latin America, as in many other regions of the world, a “culture of machismo” permeates through family behaviours and public institutions, seriously impeding progress on gender equality (Promundo, 2017). Governments recognise that getting fathers to participate in unpaid care work is a keystone of gender equality outside of the home. When asked how best to increase men’s unpaid care work at home, the most common answers were changing boys’ and men’s attitudes towards caregiving and ensuring that men do not experience discrimination when they take leave from work to care for dependents (Figure 1.9).
Many countries are encouraging a more equal division of unpaid work across men and women through fathers’ leave programmes, which incentivise fathers to leave work to care for young children (Chapter 16). Although many countries have statutory paternity leave for a few days around childbirth, leave needs to be longer to make a real difference to caregiving behaviour. Since 2000, ten OECD countries have moved to provide fathers with strong financial incentives to take parental leave for at least two months. Nordic countries often reserve parts of the parental leave period for the exclusive use for each parent for a few months, and both Japan and Korea provide mothers and fathers with around one year of non-transferable paid parental leave each. Other options include “bonus periods”, where a couple may qualify for some extra weeks of paid leave if both parents use a certain amount of shareable leave. This is the case in Germany, where two bonus months can be granted.

These programmes give fathers the incentive to take up leave by setting aside reserved (or “bonus”) months of parental leave that the family receives only if the father commits to taking leave. This is an important step, given that parenting behaviours established at childbirth tend to persist as children age, with important implications for parents’ division of paid and unpaid work later in life. Parents’ behaviour, in turn, is one of the strongest predictors of an individual’s gendered behaviours and expectations, as adult children mimic (in attitudes and acts) how their parents shared paid and unpaid work (Cunningham, 2001; McGinn et al., 2015).

Collective bargaining or enterprise-level agreements often regulate flexibility in workplace practices. Nevertheless, policy can help by providing information, facilitating companies’ exchange of best practices, encouraging collective bargaining on flexible workplace issues and by allowing employees a right to request a change in their working practices (Chapter 18). In Belgium, France, Germany and New Zealand, for example, all employees in companies of a certain size are entitled to request flexible working arrangements, e.g. changes to part-time work or different start and finishing times. Since
2013 several OECD countries, including Australia, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia and Turkey, have introduced or extended the rights of parents with young children to at least request part-time or flexible work, while both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have gone furthest in widening the “right to request” to all workers regardless of caring responsibilities or personal circumstance.

**Raising awareness**

Many OECD governments have also sought to change gender stereotypes through public awareness campaigns. Since 2013, at least six OECD countries – Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Korea, Portugal and Slovenia – have carried out national public awareness campaigns against gender stereotyping and norms, using a mixture of traditional and online media channels. Australia’s joint public-private campaign, the “Equilibrium Man Challenge”, was a novel online micro-documentary series that sought to raise awareness of the work-life balance by following a group of men who had taken up flexible work arrangements, often to care for family members.

More information is needed on the negative impact that media and social networks may have on social norms and gender stereotypes. This research, combined with more rigorous evaluations of targeted public information campaigns (Paluck et al., 2016; Broockman and Kalla, 2016), would improve the effectiveness of future efforts to reduce gender stereotyping.

**The way forward**

**Strengthening international measures for gender equality**

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Agenda 2030’s gender-dedicated goal and targets (SDG5), promises to make gender equality a higher priority in national and global development agendas (Chapter 2). Agenda 2030’s universal framework is a sober reminder that no country has achieved gender equality. Despite some improvements, such as girls’ educational attainment, progress in most areas has been slow and uneven. The OECD Gender Recommendations call on adherent countries to co-operate with developing countries and emerging economies to address issues like women’s low labour force participation, gender wage gaps, early marriage, discriminatory social norms and stereotypes, and high rates of violence against women and girls.

Many legal and institutional barriers, too, still remain. Women in over 100 countries covered by the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) have to contend with legal and other forms of discrimination in their access to land and property, while domestic violence legislation is inadequate in 77 countries (OECD, 2014b). All these factors have detrimental effects on women’s rights and well-being and on national development outcomes.

The OECD plays an active role in promoting the principles underlying the OECD Gender Recommendations at G7 meetings:

- The OECD promoted women’s entrepreneurship and role models as agreed by G7 leaders at their summit in Schloss Elmau in 2015.
- For Japan’s presidency of the G7, the OECD helped develop an initiative that encourages more girls and women to enter STEM disciplines.
- In 2017, the OECD worked closely with the Italy’s presidency of G7 to develop a roadmap for a Gender-Responsive Economic Environment.
The OECD was also instrumental in bringing gender equality to the fore of the G20 agenda, particularly in setting the target adopted by G20 Leaders at the 2014 Brisbane Summit to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation by 25% by 2025, and in drawing up a set of key policy principles to improve the quality of employment (OECD et al., 2014). Given that young women are as well-educated as young men (if not more so), their contributions to the labour market far exceed that of added work hours. Achieving the G20 gender target would bring millions more women into the workforce, reduce poverty, and significantly increase growth across the OECD and the G20. Many G20 countries are on the right path in reaching this target, but policy efforts are still needed to make this a reality (Figure 1.10).

**Figure 1.10. Many countries are well-placed to meet the 25% by 2025 target**

Actual versus expected percentage point change in the gender gap in labour force participation, 15-64 year-olds, 2012-2015

![Graph showing actual versus expected percentage point change in the gender gap in labour force participation](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933573981)

*Note: The actual decline refers to the actual change in the gender gap in the labour force participation rate between 2012 and 2015. The expected decline is calculated assuming a linear decline in the gender gap between 2012 and 2025. For Argentina, the data for 2015 refer to Q2 2015. For India, the data refer to the population aged 15 and over. No recent data are available for China to calculate the actual decline in the gender gap. For China, the data for 2012 have been projected to calculate the expected decline in the gender gap. Data accessed March 2017.

*Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on national labour force surveys.*

In Mexico, for example, reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25% by 2025 could add 0.24 percentage points to the projected annual average growth rate of GDP per capita for the period 2013-25 – equivalent to boosting cumulative GDP per capita growth by just under 4 percentage points over the whole period (see Annex 1.A1 for method and results). Going further and halving the gender gap in labour force participation by 2025 could lead to a cumulative 8.7 percentage point increase in growth in GDP per capita over the period 2013-25. The largest potential gains are in Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Mexico and Turkey. Potential effects are smaller in Canada, New Zealand and European countries where existing gender gaps in labour participation are relatively small, at least in terms of headcount participation. Indeed, equality in working hours and labour force participation would bring additional increases in countries where women often work fewer than 30 hours per week, with sizeable increases projected in countries like Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2012).
Building on good practice

The evidence in this report confirms that much remains to be done to narrow – and eventually close – gender gaps. Countries must redouble their efforts through sustained campaigns, the monitoring and evaluation of policies, exchanges of best practice, and the expansion of legal measures and public investments. Governments and stakeholders should draw from the different policies in this report and learn from best practices, including:

- The various STEM-related initiatives across the OECD,
- Support for a better work-life balance of working parents through the provision of parental leave and ECEC,
- Pay transparency initiatives to reduce gender pay gaps,
- Different policy pathways towards better representation of women in public and private leadership,
- Efforts to help partners more evenly share paid and unpaid work,
- Initiatives to improve access to finance for female entrepreneurs, and
- Efforts to promote good governance for gender equality.

Some countries face greater challenges than others, but all countries have room to improve on gender equality. No single road that leads to equality. The “best” policy options are country-specific; policy changes should reflect existing gaps in gender equality and will be influenced by broader institutional, historical and cultural contexts. Given the size of prevailing gender gaps, all countries must urgently improve their gender equality policies to improve the outcomes of all women, men, boys and girls.
References


Database references


Annex 1.A1

Increasing female labour supply and the growth dividend

Promoting gender equality and encouraging female labour participation could yield considerable economic gains in OECD and G20 countries. This analysis uses the “25% by 2025” target as a benchmark for progress in labour force participation, even for countries outside the G20. To illustrate potential effects, research conducted for this report made use of the OECD’s in-house labour force projection and long-term growth models to estimate both the size of the labour force (15-74 year-olds) and GDP per capita in OECD and G20 countries under three hypothetical scenarios:

- The “baseline” scenario, where labour force participation rates of men and women of all ages are estimated using the OECD’s standard dynamic age-cohort model, which projects participation rates (by gender and five-year age groups) based on current (2006-15) rates of labour market entry and exit. In many countries, there has been a trend increase in the female labour force participation. Not, though, in China or the United States, where rates declined among men and women. There have also been different trends by age group. While labour participation has fallen in many countries among young people as they have stayed on longer in education, it has risen among prime age and older workers in a number of countries in response to rising standards of educational attainment and stronger financial incentives to remain in work.

- The “gender gap reduced by 25% by 2025” scenario. In this scenario, male participation rates are projected (by five-year age group) on the basis of current (2006-15) rates of labour market entry and exit. As for female participation rates, they are projected so that the gap observed in 2012 between male and female participation rates within each five-year age group falls by 25% by 2025.

- The “gender gap reduced by 50% by 2025” scenario. In this scenario, male participation rates are projected (by five-year age group) on the basis of current (2006-15) rates of labour market entry and exit. Female participation rates are projected so that the gap observed in 2012 between male and female participation rates within each five-year age group falls by 50% by 2025.

For the targeted fall of 25% by 2025 in the labour participation gender gap, a baseline scenario was developed which accounts for likely changes in the labour force participation of men and women in the absence of any policy reforms. The baseline scenario does not assume fixed participation rates, but constant labour force entry and exit rates for five-year age groups at their historical average over the period 2006-15.

Estimates of the size of the labour force in each of the three scenarios were produced by combining the assumed labour force participation rates with projections of the size of the working age population (15-74 year-olds) from the OECD Population and Demography Database. In each case, the labour force was projected individually by gender and five-year age group, with the overall labour force size being the sum across both genders and all
five-year age groups. If the projected labour force size is smaller than the baseline scenario, then it is assumed that the baseline scenario applies.

Estimates of GDP per capita were calculated using a modified version of the long-term growth models presented in OECD Economic Outlook, No. 95 (OECD, 2014). These growth models estimate GDP based on a standard Cobb-Douglas production function with the usual long-term growth determinants (i.e. physical capital, human capital, potential employment and labour efficiency). Estimates of changes to GDP per capita in each of the three scenarios were produced by adjusting projections from the long-term growth models according to the assumed change (relative to the baseline) in the overall labour force participation rate (which enters the model as a sub-component of potential employment). In each case, changes and developments in all other factors of production – such as physical and human capital, productivity, and the remaining sub-components of potential employment – were held steady at the baseline.

Although the size of the labour force (15-74 year-olds) is projected to rise in OECD countries, it will decline significantly in Germany, Japan, the Russian Federation and the European Union as a whole with population ageing. In some countries (e.g. Australia and Canada), meeting the 25\% target for a reduction in the gender gap in labour force participation by 2025 would involve only a modest further increase in the size of the labour force relative to the baseline scenario, as the gender gap in labour force participation is already set to fall by close to 25\% by 2025 (to judge by recent trends).

Table 1.A1.1 shows estimates of the average annual rate of growth in GDP per capita and the cumulative points change (relative to the baseline) in growth in GDP per capita under each of the three hypothetical scenarios. Results suggest that the effects of closing gender gaps in participation rates would vary considerably from country to country but also that, in a number of cases, the potential growth dividend from closing gender gaps and boosting labour forces could be substantial.

In Mexico, for example, reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25\% by 2025 could, through increases in the size of the labour force, add 0.24 percentage points to the projected annual average growth rate of GDP per capita for the period 2013-25 – equivalent to boosting cumulative GDP per capita growth by just under 4 percentage points over the whole period. Going further and halving the gender gap in labour participation by 2025 (the “50-by-2025 scenario”) could add up to 0.67 percentage points to the projected average annual growth rate for the period 2013-25, equivalent to a 8.7 percentage point increase in growth across the whole period.

The largest potential gains can seemingly be reaped in Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Mexico and Turkey. They would be smaller in Canada, New Zealand and European countries where existing gender gaps in labour participation are relatively small, at least in terms of headcount participation. In a number of European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland) plus Chile, Israel and Japan, reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25\% by 2025 might not add any further boost to the average annual rate of growth in GDP per capita. The reason is that, on the basis of recent trends, gender gaps in labour participation in these countries are already expected to fall by at least a quarter by 2025. However, almost all of these countries could still see gains in GDP growth if they were to go further and reduce the gender gap in labour force participation by 50\% by 2025 (the “50-by-2025 scenario”).
Table 1.A1.1. Projected average annual growth rate in GDP per capita in USD 2005 PPP, percentage, 2013-25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OECD countries</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>25-by-2025 scenario: gender gaps in LFPR reduced by a quarter by 2025</th>
<th>50-by-2025 scenario: gender gaps in LFPR halved by 2025</th>
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<td>Projected average annual growth rate</td>
<td>Projected average annual growth rate</td>
<td>Percentage points change relative to baseline</td>
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</table>

LFPR: Labour force participate rate.


StatLink: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933573943

These projections are purely mechanical insofar as they assume changes in female participation do not interact with other labour inputs – such as male labour participation, or male and female working hours – or any other production factors like physical or human capital or productivity. With these limitations in mind, projections should be read only as estimates or approximations of the impact that changes in female labour supply will have on economic output.