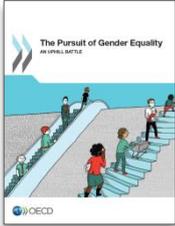


How does JAPAN compare?



The 2017 OECD report *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle* explores how gender inequalities persist in social and economic life around the world. Young women in OECD countries have more years of schooling than young men, on average, but women are less still likely to engage in paid work. Gaps widen with age, as motherhood typically has negative effects on women's pay and career advancement. Women are also less likely to be entrepreneurs, and are under-represented in private and public leadership. In the face of these challenges, this report assesses whether (and how) countries are closing gender gaps in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and public life. The report presents a range of statistics on gender gaps, reviews public policies targeting gender inequality, and offers key policy recommendations.

Gender gaps in Japan

There is a sharp division of labour in Japan, with women doing more than three quarters of the unpaid work and caregiving and men working very long office hours. Removing obstacles that limit women's paid work and participation in the labour market is not just a matter of social justice in Japan – it is an economic necessity, too. As Japan is the fastest ageing society in the OECD, improving women's employment participation and job quality is needed to keep Japan's economic engine going.

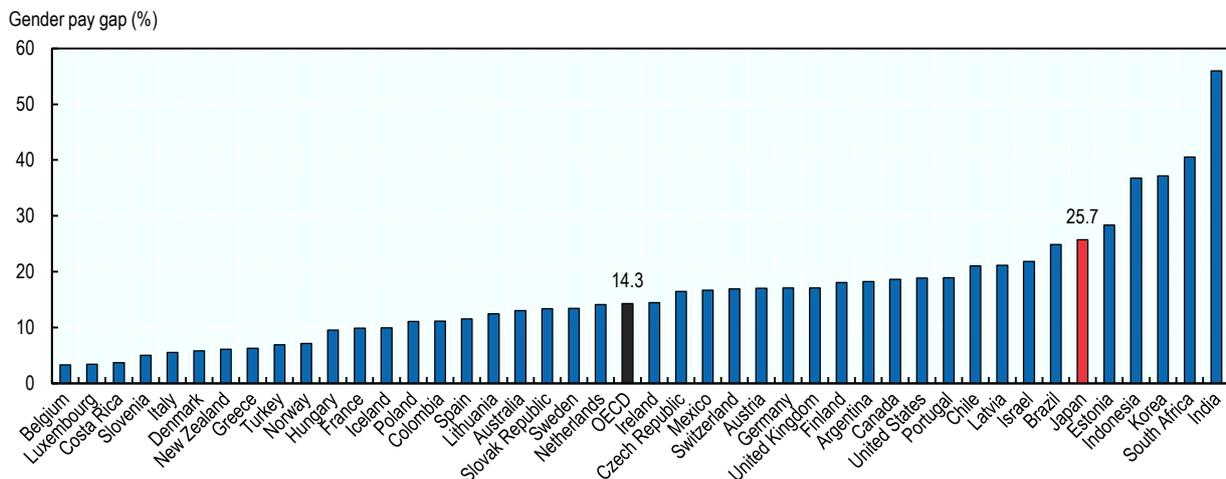
While there has been some progress in recent years, Japan still has the third highest gender pay gap in the OECD – at 25.7%, down from 32.8% in 2005 (Chapter 12). When women withdraw from work to care for children (as is common in Japan), these career interruptions can also contribute to gender gaps in pension entitlements

and consequently affect older women's likelihood of living in poverty.

Working women in Japan face an uphill battle in advancing their careers. Japan ranks among the lowest in the OECD for women in management positions and for the share of women on boards of directors, and Japan also fares badly in the number of women in leadership in public life (Chapter 14). These gaps can reinforce negative gender stereotypes and inadvertently curtail the aspirations of girls and women of all ages.

More needs to be done to promote public policies that encourage gender equality in work, to help women build strong careers and take on leadership roles in society in order to meet the demographic challenges of today and in the future.

Gender pay gap, 2015 or latest available year



Notes: Gender gap in median earnings for full-time employees. The gender gap is defined as the difference between male and female median monthly earnings divided by male median monthly earnings for full-time employees. See [Figure 1.3]

Summary indicators of gender equality

	Female share (%) of Bachelor's graduates	Female share (%) of Bachelor's graduates in STEM	Gender gap (p.p.) in the labour force participation rate	Female share (%) of managers	Gender pay gap (median earnings, full-time employees, %)	Gender gap (p.p.) in the share of workers who are employers	Female share (%) of seats in parliament
Japan	45.4	15.4	18.2	12.4	25.7	2.1	9.5
OECD average	58.2	31.1	12.2	31.2	14.3	3.3	28.7
Top performer	69.1 (SWE)	41.4 (POL)	3.0 (FIN)	44.3 (LVA)	3.3 (BEL)	1.7 (NOR)	47.6 (ISL)
Bottom performer	45.4 (JPN)	15.4 (JPN)	42.0 (TUR)	10.5 (KOR)	37.2 (KOR)	4.6 (ISR)	9.5 (JPN)

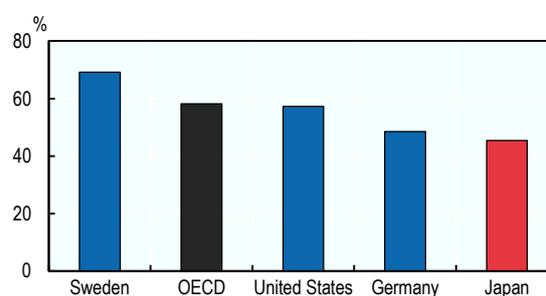
Notes: BEL = Belgium, FIN = Finland, ISL = Iceland, ISR = Israel, JPN = Japan, KOR = Korea, LVA = Latvia, NOR = Norway, POL = Poland, SWE = Sweden, TUR = Turkey

In a survey carried out for *The Pursuit of Gender Equality*, governments 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. Many OECD countries are now prioritizing these issues in policy, and many are also pushing to get more women into public and private sector leadership.

Girls and women's performance in education

Japan made promoting the active role of women in STEM fields and career a priority of its G7 Presidency in 2016. Japanese girls and women perform very well in OECD education evaluation programs PISA and PIAAC, with Japanese women performing highest in PIAAC among women in the OECD. Despite this, Japan has the lowest female share of bachelor's graduates in the OECD (45.4%) (Chapter 8), and the lowest female share of STEM graduates too. In recognition of the lower participation of women in post-secondary education, Japan has developed measures aimed encouraging greater female participation in STEM fields.

Female share of bachelor's graduates, 2014

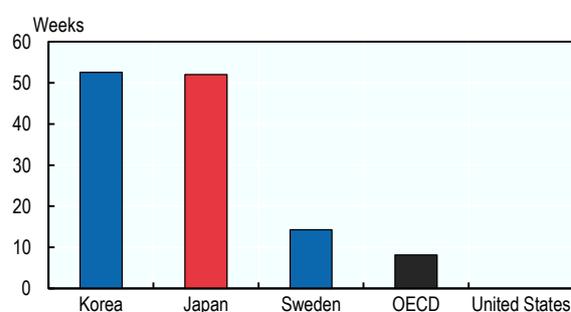


Notes: See [Figure 8.1](#).

Fathers-only leave – breaking with tradition?

New fathers in Japan have access to up to one year of parental leave as an individual entitlement – one of the longest fathers-only leaves in the OECD. Unfortunately, there is very low take-up of this progressive social policy – fewer than 3% of new fathers take leave, and most will only take less than one month. Take-up is so low because men fear the reactions of their colleagues and the career consequences of taking leave. The long hours' culture at workplaces is another impediment to a better sharing of paid and unpaid work among men and women. The government is taking steps to encourage companies to enable men to take parental leave. This can be further strengthened through information campaigns to break-down stereotypes and increase men's involvement in caregiving.

Fathers-only paid leave, 2016

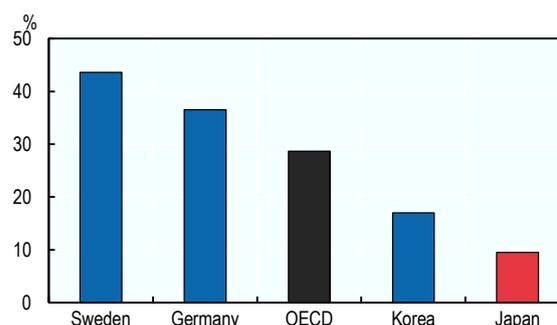


Notes: Data refer to paid paternity leave and fathers-only paid parental leave. See [Figure 16.1](#).

Too few Japanese women in the Diet and on boards of directors

Japan has the most male-dominated political class in the OECD, with a mere 9.5% of women in parliament. The share of seats on boards of directors in publicly listed companies in Japan is the second lowest among OECD countries at 3.4% (Chapter 14). While non-binding targets have been proposed to increase women's representation in government organizations and large companies, there is little enthusiasm for affirmative action in the political sphere that would see an increase in women in elected offices. Policymakers in Japan may wish to consider strengthening measures that can bring greater representation of women in parliament and in other spheres of public life, to help ensure women's concerns are addressed.

Female share of seats in parliament, 2016



Notes: Data refer to the situation on 01/12/2016. Lower house or single chamber only. See [Figure 1.8](#)