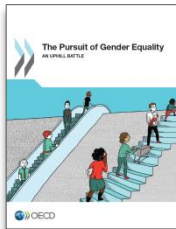


How does AUSTRALIA compare?



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 equality in Australia has room for improvement

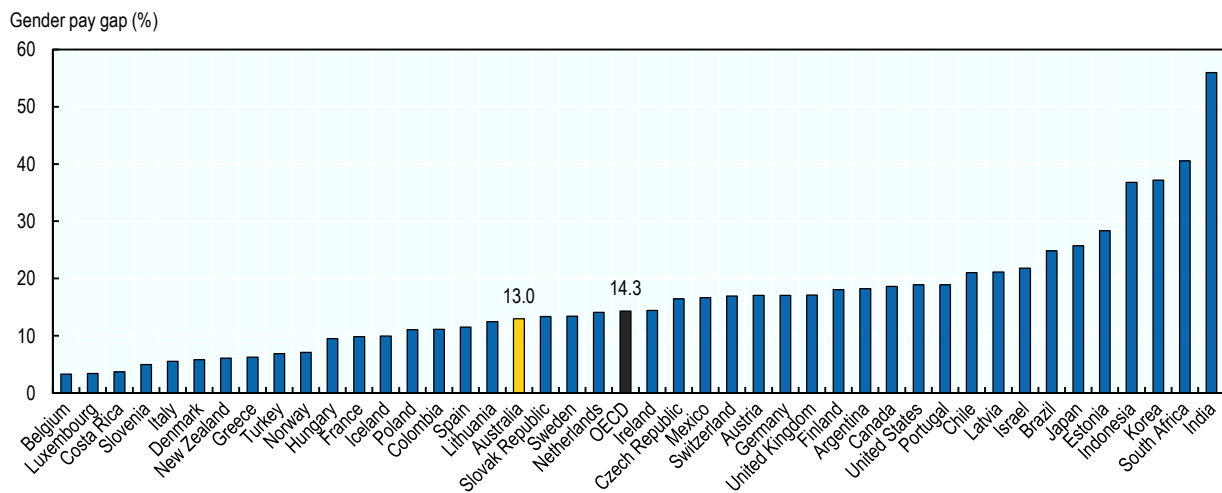
Australia is a mid-range performer in the OECD across most gender equality outcomes. Young women in Australia have made significant gains in educational attainment, and now make up 58.7% of all graduates from undergraduate degree programmes – a share slightly above the OECD average. Despite this strong educational performance, women are less likely than men to engage in paid work and continue to earn less. The median full-time working woman in Australia earns 87 cents to every man's dollar, relative to an OECD average of 85.7 cents to the dollar [Chapter 12].

Many factors contribute to the gender wage gap, including women's higher likelihood of interrupting their careers for childrearing and employer discrimination. Another key contributor to the wage gap is job segregation by gender. Although Australian women are more likely than men to go to university, women are much less likely to study (and later

work in) the lucrative science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. Related to this, there is also highly gendered segregation in job sector: only 8.7% of women in Australia work in industry, compared to 30.9% of men [Chapter 11]. Across countries, including Australia, women are much more highly concentrated in service jobs, which tend to pay less than more technical roles.

Achieving gender equality in Australia will require a multifaceted approach. Women's disproportionate responsibility to provide unpaid caregiving presents a major barrier to women's labour force advancement across sectors, and Australia must recommit to gender equality in caregiving and promoting both parents' labour force participation. This requires strengthening policies that make it easier for both mothers and fathers to work, including longer paid parental leave, good-quality childcare, tax incentives, and out-of-school hours care. Australia has initiated some novel campaigns to break down gender stereotypes, but more work is needed.

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. Data for Australia are based on weekly earnings. 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
Australia	58.7	34.0	11.5	36.2	13.0	3.4	28.7
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)

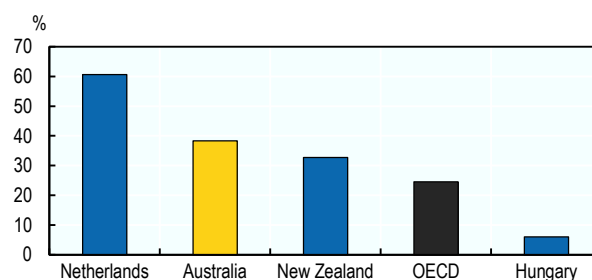
Notes: BEL = Belgium, FIN = Finland, ISL = Iceland, ISR = Israel, JPN = Japan, KOR = Korea, LVA = Latvia, NOR = Norway, POL = Poland, SWE = Sweden, TUR = Turkey

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.

Part-time workers are a source of untapped potential

A high share of working women in Australia spend much of their working lives in part-time employment – particularly women with children, including lone parents [Chapter 13]. Many of these part-time workers spend fewer than 30 hours per week in the labour market. Part-time work is an entrenched feature of the Australian economy and levels remained constant between 2004 and 2014 [Chapter 18]. In the context of the relatively flexible Australian labour market, policies that incentivise mothers to work more hours could increase productivity and reduce earnings gaps. Achieving equality in working hours and labour force participation could bring significant benefit to the Australian GDP [Chapter 1].

Female part-time employment rates, 2014

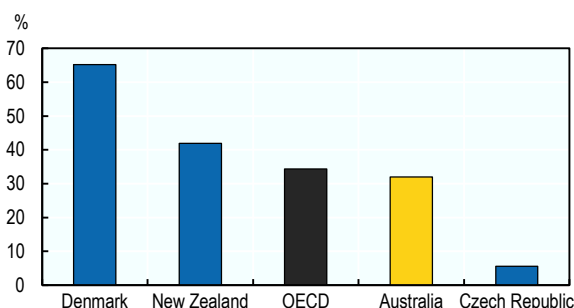


Notes: Female part-time employment as a % of total female employment. Part-time generally defined as usual weekly working hours of less than 30 in main job. For Australia, normal hours in all jobs. See [Figure 18.1](#).

Ongoing need for affordable child care in Australia

Australian children are less likely than children in many other OECD countries to participate in formal childcare or pre-school, reflecting and limiting the extent to which Australian mothers engage in paid work [Chapter 17]. While not as expensive as in some other English-speaking countries, childcare costs in Australia are relatively high – the net cost of childcare for a two-child dual-earner Australian family on moderate earnings equals around 20% of disposable family income, compared to 13% on average across the OECD. Forthcoming reforms to childcare subsidies may help reduce net childcare costs for some families, especially low-income families, though the final impact on the amounts charged to parents remains to be seen.

Participation in formal childcare, 0-2 year-olds, 2014



Notes: Participation rates for 0-2 year-olds in formal childcare and pre-school services. See [Figure 17.1](#)

Prioritising violence against women

Around the world, in countries at all levels of income, violence against women (VAW) remains a problem. Since 2010, Australia has attempted to take a multifaceted approach to supporting women who are victims of violence through the implementation of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their children. The Plan has a strong focus on prevention, and includes funding to improve services for women and to provide education resources to help change community attitudes to violence and abuse. Mexico and Sweden have also recently introduced national strategies on VAW, but most OECD countries do not take such a holistic approach. Australia's work in this domain shows promise and should be carefully evaluated as a tool to prevent violence, protect victims, and ensure women's fair access to justice.

Combatting stereotypes

Social and labour policies can only go so far in achieving gender equality if stereotypes continue to limit women's (and men's) choices. Australia has made efforts to change gender stereotypes and reduce the gender wage gap through public information campaigns and greater transparency by employers. For example, the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency collects sex-disaggregated pay information from large employers and helps companies develop their gender equity objectives to help close the wage gap. Australia also sought to raise awareness of work-life balance issues in a joint public/private online campaign focused on fathers. Public awareness campaigns show promise as a "soft" tool for influencing stereotypes, and should be rigorously evaluated to see whether (and how durably) they change attitudes.