



Joining Forces for Gender Equality

WHAT IS HOLDING US BACK?

Country note: France



Joining Forces for Gender Equality comprehensively analyses developments and policies for gender equality, including issues such as gender mainstreaming and budgeting, reforms to increase fathers' involvement in parental leave and childcare, pay transparency initiatives to tackle gender pay gaps, and systems to address gender-based violence. Increasingly, governments are paying attention to gender inequalities to more policy areas, including energy, the environment, foreign direct investment, nuclear energy, trade, and transport. Advancing gender equality is not just a moral imperative; it will strengthen future gender-equal economic growth and social cohesion.

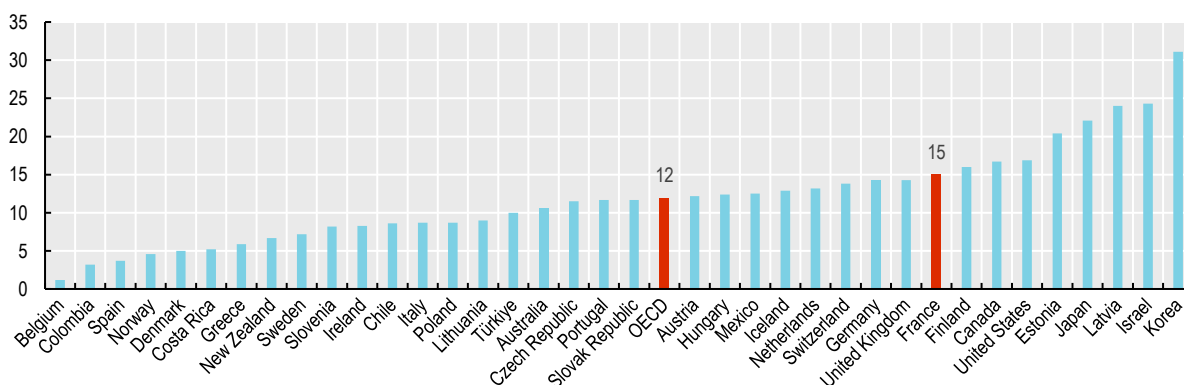
Gender equality in France

France has average-to-good gender equality outcomes compared to other OECD countries (Table 1). Gender gaps in school performance of young men and women are close to or at the OECD average, and so is the share of women among masters' graduates. The gender gap in labour force participation is among the lowest in the OECD, and France also has an above average share of women among managers and self-employed employers. France has a relatively high share of women in public employment – almost twice as much as the share of men, but women make up a third of government senior management - below the OECD average. However, in terms of women on boards of listed companies, France is at the top of all OECD countries (Chapter 17). Since 2021, the obligation of balanced representation has been extended for companies with at least 1 000 employees to all management bodies, together with an obligation of transparency.

The gender pay gap remains persistent, stemming from longstanding structural inequalities, such as an unequal division of paid and unpaid work, women having the same skills but different jobs and responsibilities than men within firms, and occupational and sectoral segregation with an undervaluation of traditionally female-dominated jobs (Chapter 16). At about 15%, the gender pay gap for full-time earners in France is above the OECD average (Figure 1). The introduction of a comprehensive equal pay audit and gender pay gap reporting system in 2019 – the Professional Equality Index (*L'Index de l'Égalité Professionnelle Entre les Femmes et les Hommes*), applicable to companies with 50 or more employees - could help narrow the difference in pay between men and women in future (Chapter 27).

Figure 1. At 15%, the French gender wage gap remains above the OECD average

Difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men, full-time earners percentages, 2021 or latest data available



Note: Data refer to 2021, or except for Belgium, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Switzerland refer to 2020; for Ireland and Israel to 2019; and for Iceland, Slovenia and Türkiye to 2018.

Source: OECD Gender wage gap indicator, available at <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm>. – [Figure 16.1].

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Table 1. Summary indicators of gender equality

| | Education | | | Employment & Entrepreneurship | | | Governance | | |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| | Gender gap in mean PISA reading scores (boys–girls) | Gender gap in mean PISA mathematics scores (boys–girls) | Share of women among masters' graduates (%) | Gender gap in the labour force participation rate (men–women) (p.p.) | Share of women among managerial employment (%) | Share of women among self-employed with employees (%) | Share of women among parliamentary representatives (%) | Share of women among public sector employment (%) | Share of women among central government senior management (%) |
| FRANCE | -25 | 6 | 55 | 6 | 38 | 27 | 38 | 64 | 31 |
| OECD average | -29 | 6 | 58 | 11 | 34 | 25 | 34 | 58 | 37 |
| Best female outcome | -52 (FIN) | -10 (ISL) | 69 (ISL) | 2 (LTU) | 46 (LVA) | 33 (NZL) | 50 (MEX/NZL) | 72 (SWE) | 56 (LVA) |
| Worst female outcome | -10 (COL) | 20 (COL) | 35 (JPN) | 40 (TUR) | 13 (JPN) | 12 (TUR) | 10 (JPN) | 25 (TUR) | 4 (JPN) |

Note: Best and worst female outcomes are shown according to the size of women's share relative to the OECD average share or according to the size of the gap relative to the OECD average gap. Source: OECD Gender Data Portal, www.oecd.org/gender/data.

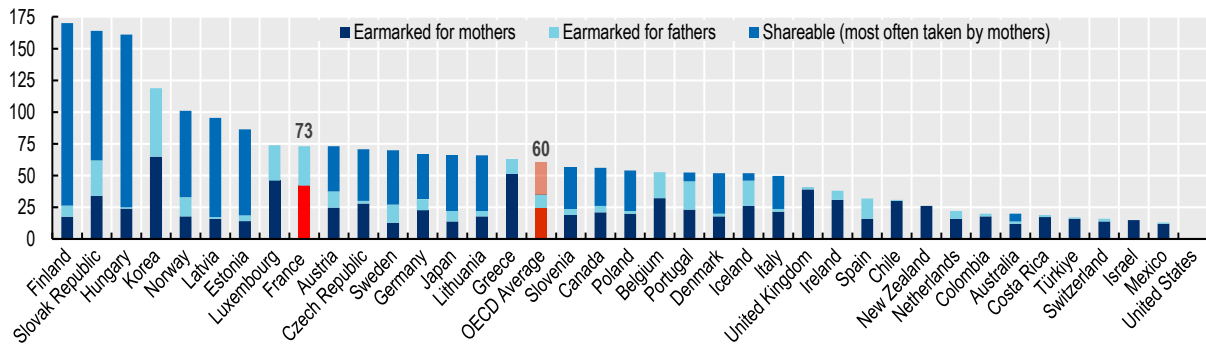
Much of the gender differences in pay – as well as many other gender inequalities on the labour market and at home – emerge and widen once children arrive. Mothers tend to take longer leaves of absence from work than fathers and sometimes only return to work part-time. With 21%, the share of women who work less than 30 hours per week is below the average across OECD countries of 25% (Chapter 13).

Participation rates in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in France are above the OECD average (Chapter 24). However, while substantial public supports mean that childcare itself is affordable, shortages exist in the capacity of public crèche facilities for children not yet three years of age.

France is one of the OECD countries that provides strong incentives for fathers to use (at least some) parental leave. For example both parents have earmarked paid parental leave entitlements of 6 months each for the first child in addition to maternity and paternity leaves (Figure 2). However, the low flat-rate parental leave benefit payments contribute to a limited number of fathers taking parental leave (OECD Family Database). Furthermore, the duration of paternity leave in France is one of the highest in the OECD, with 25 calendar days (or 28 days in the case of multiple births) plus 3 days of birth leave.

Figure 2. France incentivises fathers to take parental leave through earmarked entitlements

Duration of paid maternity-, paternity-, parental- and homecare leave entitlements, in weeks, April 2022



Note: Since April 2022, there have been reforms of parental leave systems in various countries, including Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Japan, the Netherlands, and the Slovak Republic. In Japan, parents would have to take the “shareable” portion simultaneously (see Figure 23.1). Source: OECD Family Database, Indicator PF2.1, https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf - [Figure 23.1]

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