

Occupations of men and women

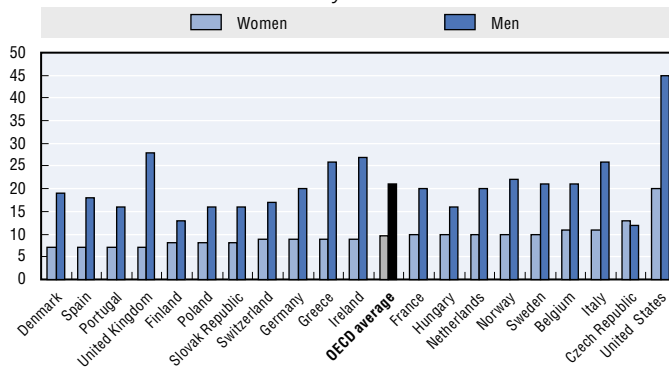
Did you know?

Women tend to work in a much narrower range of occupations than men.

The International Labour Organisation lists 110 major occupation groups in their classification of occupations (ISCO). In OECD countries for which information is available, half of all women work in eleven or fewer of these occupations.

Comparable information on occupations is available only for the European members of the OECD and the United States. In these countries, at least half of all working women are in eleven of the 110 occupations while half of the men work in more than twenty of them. This suggests that women tend to enter a more restricted range of professions than men. But it could also be partly a statistical illusion. It is possible that a gender bias may have inadvertently appeared due to a more detailed breakdown of the occupations that are typically chosen by men. Gender gaps – whether real or statistical – are particularly marked in the United States, Italy, Ireland, Greece and the United Kingdom.

Number of occupations that account for half of total employment
2004 or latest year available



The table below shows the top ten “gender-biased” occupations on average in Europe and the United States. In the first column, the numbers in brackets are the ratios of women to men in these occupations. For example, 14.5 times more women than men work as “pre-primary teaching associate professionals”. In the second column the genders are reversed so that, for example, there are just over 80 men working as “miners, shot-firers, stone cutters and carvers” for each woman in this occupation.

Concentration of employment in 20 OECD countries

Many more women than men work as:	Many more men than women work as:
Pre-primary education teaching associate professionals (14.5)	Miners, shot firers, stone cutters and carvers (80.2)
Nursing and midwifery professionals (10.1)	Building frame and related trades workers (64.8)
Secretaries and keyboard-operating clerks (9.8)	Ships' deck crews and related workers (52.9)
Nursing and midwifery associate professionals (9.5)	Building finishers and related trades workers (35.4)
Personal care and related workers (9.3)	Mining and construction labourers (35.3)
Primary education teaching associate professionals (6.2)	Agricultural and other mobile plant operators (30.5)
Shop, stall and market salespersons and demonstrators (5.8)	Mining and mineral-processing-plant operators (24.5)
Special education teaching professionals (5.6)	Metal moulders, welders, sheet-metal workers, structural-metal preparers, and related trades workers (23.1)
Domestic and related helpers, cleaners and laundrerers (5.4)	Machinery mechanics and fitters (21.7)
Primary and pre-primary education teaching (5.3)	Power-production and related plant operators (15.9)

Source: European Labour Force Survey and March Current Population Survey for the United States.

Further reading:

OECD (2005), *OECD Employment Outlook*, OECD, Paris.