G7 Gender Equality Implementation Report 2023

Promoting Gender Equality Through G7 Policy

THIS IS THE FIRST G7 GENDER EQUALITY IMPLEMENTATION REPORT, PREPARED UNDER THE 2023 JAPANESE G7 PRESIDENCY AT THE REQUEST OF G7 LEADERS AND IN CONSULTATION WITH G7 MEMBERS, AS PART OF THE G7 MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM (MAM) (ELMAU 2022)

BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

The report presents good practices and progress made by the G7 in meeting commitments related to gender equality made during G7 Presidencies since 2017. The report aims to inform future G7 decision-making on gender equality. The report provides an overview of efforts to promote family-friendly policies; reduce gender pay gaps and improve women's leadership in public and private sectors; promote women's entrepreneurship; and foster women's participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The report also discusses efforts to address gender-based violence, as well as policies targeted at global challenges, including supporting gender equality in conflict and fragile settings.

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This document replaces the previous version published on 15 December 2023. The image for Figure 7 has been corrected.

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Executive summary

Fostering gender equality is one of the key priorities of the G7 and has featured prominently in annual Leaders' Communiqués across various presidencies. Gender disparities persist across various areas in all G7 countries and beyond. Young women reach higher educational attainment than young men but remain underrepresented in fields of studies that offer the best economic prospects. Furthermore, women generally have less favourable outcomes in the labour market, spend a significant amount of time on unpaid care and housework, encounter obstacles when pursuing entrepreneurship and are underrepresented among leadership positions in the public and private sector. At the same time, women and girls in all their diversity are also disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence,[1] which are persistent abhorrent manifestations of gender inequality.

This report considers commitments related to gender equality made during G7 Presidencies and monitors how G7 countries' policies and legal frameworks have evolved to meet these commitments across various areas since the 2017 Taormina Summit. This includes an analysis of the promotion of gender equality in labour markets and entrepreneurship; the development of policies to reduce barriers and support more women in work using digital, scientific, and technological skills; the promotion of gender equality on a global scale including through development co-operation and in conflict-affected and fragile contexts; as well as policies that aim to eradicate gender-based violence including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in development co-operation and humanitarian assistance.

There is certainly scope for further, substantial progress in gender equality. Yet, all G7 countries have made significant efforts. For example, progress has been made to improve employment outcomes of women – particularly mothers – by involving more fathers in taking parental leave and expanding public childcare capacity and supports, while improving flexible work regulations. The growing use of pay transparency tools among G7 countries is promoting progress in pay equality, while setting goals for equity deserving groups can help secure a better representation of women in leadership positions. With better access to finance and capital, barriers to women's entrepreneurship are slowly reduced, while increasing collaboration between universities, business, and policy makers aims to bring more girls and young women into the most lucrative educational fields.

Women and girls in all their diversity continue to bear the overwhelming consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), commonly at the hands of their current or former male intimate partners. G7 countries are promoting integrated policies as a means of co-ordinating multisectoral solutions and better preventing, addressing, and responding to sexual and gender-based violence. This requires a whole-of-government

[1] GBV is standard international terminology for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. The term 'gender-based violence' is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials between males and females around the world place females at risk for multiple forms of violence including sexual, mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. The term is also used by some actors to describe some forms of sexual violence against males and /or targeted violence against LGBTIQA+ populations (IASC, 2015[199]).

approach and entails integration at all levels of government, including the service delivery level. Strategic frameworks for GBV can help improve decision-making processes by focusing attention on the most crucial issues and challenges, as well as co ordinating policy implementation and – importantly – funding across levels and functions of government.

1 Setting the scene: Gender gaps persist

Striving for an environment wherein all people, in all their diversity can thrive equally is first and foremost a moral and social imperative. But it also has a strong economic basis, as incorporating more women on an equal footing into the labour market is crucial for sustained economic growth in future. Education is one area where girls and women have made huge progress, and the level of educational attainment of young women is higher than that of young men in all G7 countries. However, choices in area of study remain frequently driven by attitudes rather than aptitude, and young women tend to choose certain fields like education, health, and welfare, rather than the often financially more rewarding study-areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

The labour market remains fraught with gender-related challenges that inhibit women from reaching their full potential, and women from disadvantaged minorities (ethnic/racial, low socio-economic background, migrants) often face multiple barriers to overcome. Women are less likely to engage in paid work, face a persistent wage gap, and encounter glass ceilings in professional advancement. One important reason for these disparities lies in structural barriers and discriminatory social and gender norms that result in an elevated burden of unpaid care- and housework for women, and mothers in particular. Indeed, mothers typically take parental leave for longer than fathers do, resulting in more time away from the workplace. Also, many mothers return to work on a part-time basis, which often stalls further career progression. All these labour market challenges impede women's economic empowerment and contribute to the "leaky pipelines" partially responsible for the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in the public and private sectors (OECD, 2023[1]).

Global challenges can, at least temporarily, exacerbate existing gendered disparities within and across countries and particularly affect women and girls in all their diversity. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, women, who make up most workers in health- and care related occupations, were at the front lines of the pandemic response. At the same time gender gaps in entrepreneurship widened as sectors where women are concentrated (e.g. personal services and tourism) were disproportionally affected. School and childcare closures increased mothers' portion of unpaid care work, exacerbating labour market disadvantages and stress. Other global crises, such as Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the cost of living and energy crisis have also particularly affected women and girls (OECD, 2023[1]; Queisser, 2021[2]).

Sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) constitute an abhorrent form of gender inequality in G7 countries and beyond. GBV can impact anyone, but it mainly stems from power imbalances that leave women and girls in especially vulnerable situations. Globally, for countries for which data are available, nearly one in three girls and women (28%) aged 15 to 49 years experienced Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) at least once in her lifetime; and one in ten women in this age group experienced IPV over the past 12 months (OECD Development Centre/OECD, 2023[3]) and (OECD, 2023[4]). The impact of GBV is also intersectional, with particular populations facing even greater marginalisation. For example, racial and ethnic minority women, as well as members of the LGBTIQA+ community (G7 Hiroshima Summit, 2023[5]), face heightened risks of such violence, underscoring how gender disparities can amplify other forms of disadvantage and vulnerability (UN Women, 2019[6]). Beyond G7 countries, women in fragile and conflict-

affected regions encounter an acutely elevated risk of sexual- and gender-based violence, highlighting the need for enhanced protection and support for women in these contexts (OECD, 2022[7]). To address these challenges, there has been an increasing focus on addressing GBV as a policy priority among G7countries and beyond over recent years, with an emphasis on prevention, survivor support, and legal mechanisms as well as official development assistance (ODA) towards the elimination of violence against women and girls.

Recognising these and other intersectional gender-related issues, the need for policy action has been an important feature in the G7's annual Leaders' Communiqués. Pledges to strive for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity, include measures towards reducing barriers and increasing women's equal and meaningful participation in the workforce and entrepreneurship, support for women's leadership in the public and private sector, educational programmes focused on educational choices, and initiatives that combat gender-based violence in G7 countries and conflict-zones. Beyond the commitments in Leaders' Communiqués, G7 countries are mainstreaming gender equality across many levels, so that several ministerial tracks make commitments on gender equality as well. For example, under the Japanese G7 presidency of 2023, a total of 9 Ministerial Meetings discussed gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity, committing, among other things, to reduce gender inequity and inequality in the health sector, to enhance financial access to women farmers and to increase the participation of women in the energy sector (G7 Japan, 2023[8]).

Together with the annual G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps, first released under the stewardship of the German G7 presidency in 2022, this implementation report is part of a monitoring and accountability mechanism, that aims to track progress on the implementation of G7 commitments in the field of gender equality. The Gender Equality Implementation Report is scheduled for release every three years. This mechanism was proposed by the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC), with support from the GEAC Secretariat in the United Kingdom's Cabinet Office, following an invitation from G7 Leaders at the Carbis Bay Summit in June 2021. The main objectives of the monitoring and accountability mechanism are to collate, analyse and provide existing robust, internationally comparable, and transparent data on gender equality within the G7 and on the implementation of G7 Leaders' commitments in the field of gender equality. The mechanism aims to inform and support G7 decision-making and action on gender equality, including by Leaders, Sherpas and the GEAC. It also aims to promote mutual accountability across the G7 by clearly and, where appropriate, publicly communicating progress made by the G7 and its partners in promoting gender equality. Box 1 details the methodology of the report.

Box 1. Methodology of the G7 Gender Equality Implementation Report

The *Gender Equality Implementation Report* evaluates gender-related commitments made during G7 Presidencies and monitors how G7 countries' policies have evolved to meet these commitments. This report covers gender equality commitments made during G7 presidencies over the past six years, including those from Taormina (2017), Charlevoix (2018), Biarritz (2019), Carbis Bay (2021), and Elmau (2022).

The *Gender Equality Implementation Report* tracks policy developments over time for all G7 countries as well as EU-wide policy prescriptions, such as EU-Directives that all EU-member countries must adhere to. In some cases, this report also presents best practices of specific EU or OECD countries outside of the G7 to highlight policies that have proven to be effective in fostering gender equality. Mainly considering policy progress since 2017, this report covers developments since the 2017 summit in Taormina, and therefore also addresses policy progress that has been made beyond the recent developments brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's actions in Ukraine, and the prevailing cost-of-living crisis. Occasionally, the report also refers to the status quo of policy in place before 2017 to provide context and highlight differences in the policy environments across G7 countries.

Commitments assessed in this report are mainly selected from G7 Leaders' Communiqués using specific criteria. Selected commitments are also taken from gender related G7 Roadmaps that are referred to in G7 Leaders' Communiqués as well as G7 Declarations on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Each of the chosen commitments should be of immediate relevance to present-day gender equality policy concerns and utilise firm language tied to clear actions or outcomes, and progress towards the implementation of the commitments should be measurable over time and of good quality, but an exception has been made for gender-based violence as it has such a particularly high policy relevance. Other areas where internationally comparable data of good quality is lacking and/or under development are not addressed here but could feature in future issues of the report. The report also seeks to avoid duplication, hence it does not focus on commitments already covered by other monitoring mechanisms, such as by the Accountability Working Group (2023[9]), and should also be concise and be limited to a manageable number of commitments. This report considers commitments in the following areas.

- Promoting gender equality in the labour market and entrepreneurship (G7 Charlevoix Summit, 2018[10]).
- Policies to support more women in work using digital, scientific, and technological skills (G7 Taormina Summit, 2017[11]; G7 Taormina Roadmap, 2017[12]).
- Addressing gender inequalities globally (G7 Elmau Summit, 2022[13]).
- Policies that address gender-based violence (G7 Charlevoix Summit, 2018[10]; G7 Biarritz Summit, 2019[14]; G7 Carbis Bay Summit, 2021[15]; G7 Elmau Summit, 2022[13]).

There can be some overlap between different commitments made over the years, also because the importance of policy issues leads to "re-commitment" of Leaders to policy action on a particular issue (e.g. gender-based violence). Hence, policy actions can often be linked to more than one G7 commitment, and the sections below can refer to more than one commitment.

Gender inequalities often have a compounding effect, intensifying the disadvantages faced by women and girls from different groups. These intersectional disadvantages cut across many dimensions such as migrant status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability status. For instance, in the United States, not only do Hispanic and Black women earn significantly less than White, non-Hispanic men, but their earnings are also lower than those of White, non-Hispanic women (Bleiweis, Frye and

Khattar, 2021[16]). Despite the importance of recognising these multi-faceted disadvantages, there is a lack of data in national statistics, making a comprehensive understanding of intersectionality a challenge across many G7 and/or EU countries (Box 2). For this reason, most of the report highlights general disparities between men and women, without the capacity to disaggregate data further.

Box 2. Ethnic and racial data collection in G7 countries

While each G7 country records data on the country of birth of their citizens, the availability of data on racial and ethnic identity varies across G7 countries (Table 1). For instance, the United States and Canada have a long history of collecting census data on race, ethnicity, and indigenous origin, reflecting their unique national contexts. The United Kingdom has included questions on ethnic origin and racial identity in their Census.

In other G7 countries, there is generally no collection of Census data – nor data in most period sample surveys – that covers either racial or ethnic identity. This is often a result of the specific national historical context but can follow from privacy and human rights legislation that prohibit the collection of such data, as is the case in Germany, or the concept of equality of all citizens irrespective of their origin or identity, such as in France.

Table 1. Collection of census data on migrant status and racial and ethnic identity

	Migrant status / Country of birth	Racial identity	Ethnic identity
Canada	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	Yes	No	No
Germany	Yes	No	No
Italy	Yes	No	No
Japan	Yes	No	No
United Kingdom	Yes	Yes	Yes
United States	Yes	Yes	Yes
EU-countries*	24 in 24	1 in 24	10 in 24
OECD-countries	38 in 38	8 in 38	14 in 38

Note: Data does not include information on Croatia, Cyprus and Malta.
Source: Balestra and Fleischer (2018[17]), "Diversity statistics in the OECD: How do OECD countries collect data on ethnic, racial and indigenous identity?", https://doi.org/10.1787/89bae654-en.

Nevertheless, across the G7 and beyond, there is an increasing recognition of the intersectional nature of inequalities. The *Sustainable Development Goals* emphasise that disaggregation by race, ethnicity, and indigenous identity is essential to help identify policy priorities within countries. Notwithstanding, the important role that racial and ethnic backgrounds can play, data availability remains limited overall, and a further statistical effort is needed if countries are to live up to the 2030 SDG Agenda's aspiration of "leaving no one behind" (Balestra and Fleischer, 2018[17]). Beyond racial and ethnic identity, data on sexual orientation, and gender identity would also be necessary to fully account for the intersectional nature of issues. However, sample sizes and disclosure control measures to address privacy concerns limit the available statistical detail in many OECD and EU countries.

The following sections focus on separate areas of policy action concerning the relevant gender related G7 commitments. Each section first introduces current gender-related challenges in relation to the G7 commitments and then proceeds to discuss recent progress over separate policy areas. Wherever data is available, it is used to illustrate the challenges and, if possible, the progress made since the introduction of specific policy measures.

2 Promoting gender equality in the labour market

2.1. Supporting women and economic growth

Charlevoix G7 Summit Communiqué (2018), Paragraph 10

"...We recognize that gender equality is fundamental for the fulfilment of human rights and is a social and economic imperative. However, gender inequality persists despite decades of international commitments to eliminate these differences. We will continue to work to remove barriers to women's participation and decision-making in social, economic, and political spheres as well as increase the opportunities for all to participate equally in all aspects of the labour market. Our path forward will promote women's full economic participation through working to reduce the gender wage gap, supporting women business leaders and entrepreneurs, and recognizing the value of unpaid care work...."

In G7 countries there has been a notable convergence in labour market outcomes between men and women in all their diversity over the past decades. Today, most households in G7 countries are dual-earner households, in which two partners simultaneously engage in the labour market and contribute to overall household income. Nevertheless, the full economic empowerment of women in all their diversity is held back by stubborn inequalities in many labour market outcomes, such as labour force participation and hours worked. At the same time, women continue to shoulder most of the unpaid care and housework within families – with adverse effects on their labour market engagement and potential. These gender gaps in labour market outcomes typically widen once children are present in households, as mothers take the longest leaves of absence from work. Upon their return to the labour market, many mothers are in part-time employment to manage the dual work-family responsibility that mostly falls on them, especially if affordable, quality childcare services are not available (OECD, 2023[1]).

In all G7 countries, Working-age (15-64 years) men continue to be more likely to be employed than working-age women, despite women of working-age having similar or higher levels of educational attainment in most countries (G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps 2023 Indicators 2a. and 3a.). On average across the OECD the gender gap in labour force participation was 10.4 percentage points in 2022, (Figure 1), and men were 9.7 percentage points more likely to be employed than women in 2022.

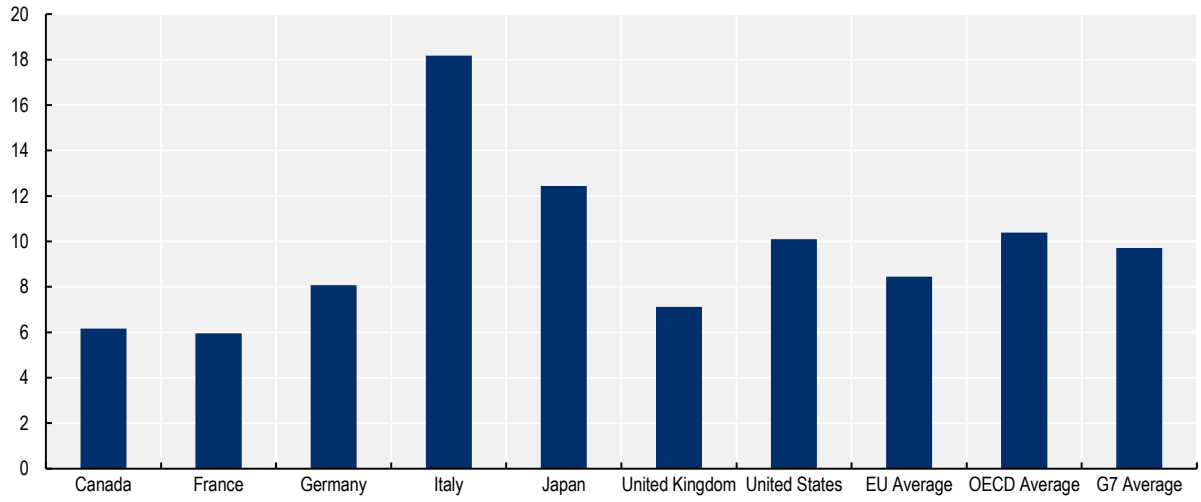
Gender gaps in the intensity of employment participation also persist. On average across G7 countries, women work about 6 fewer hours per week than men (Figure 2). Especially for mothers, it can be attractive to turn to part-time employment to combine continued labour market attachment with family responsibilities. While short- to medium-term part-time employment offers some degree of flexibility, it further contributes to gender inequalities in pay and career progression (OECD, 2023[1]), also when employed men and women have similar skills.

Across G7 countries with available data, the gender wage gap (GWG) between similarly skilled men and women mostly reflects differences within firms, rather than differences between firms. OECD (2021[18]) found that in most countries, this intra-firm gender wage gap mainly reflects differences in tasks and responsibilities, whereas differences in pay for work of equal value tend to be relatively small. This

suggests that one policy priority – besides others proven to be important such as pay reporting – must be to promote access for women to better jobs within firms. The remainder of the GWG results from the concentration of women in low-wage firms and industries. This may be the result of discriminatory hiring practices by employers, women's preferences for firms with flexible working-time arrangements, as well as the role of past educational choices and gendered socialisation processes earlier in life (OECD, 2021[18]).

Figure 1. Gender gaps in labour force participation are substantial

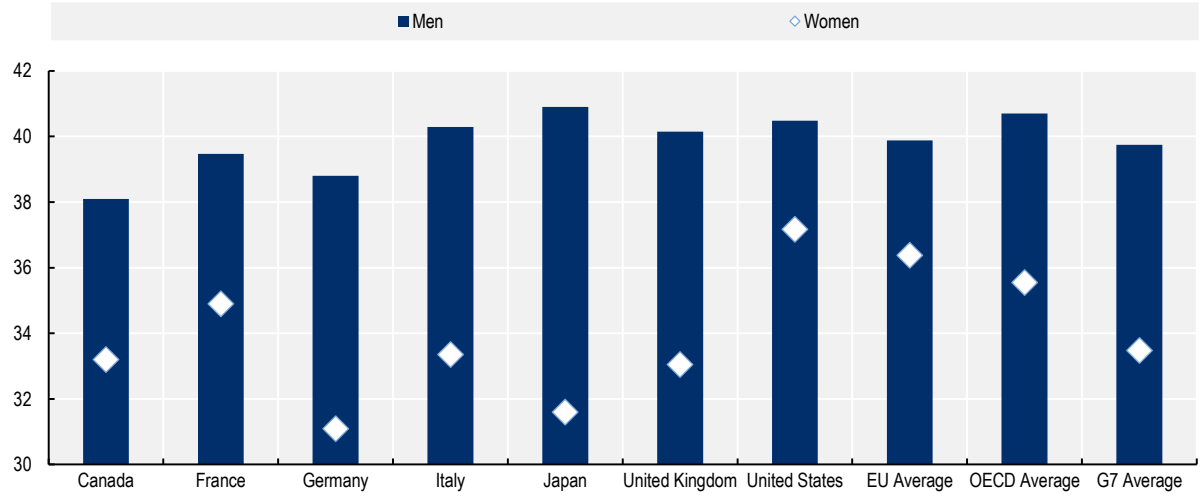
Gender gap in labour force participation rates (men – women), 15-64 year-olds, 2022 percentage points



Source: OECD Employment database, www.oecd.org/employment/emp/employmentdatabase-employment.htm.

Figure 2. Gender gaps in usual weekly working hours

Average usual weekly hours worked on the main job, total employment*, 15-64 year-olds, 2022



Note: Data for the United States refer to dependent employment only. Data for the Canada refers to 15+ year-olds.
Source: OECD Employment database, www.oecd.org/employment/emp/employmentdatabase-employment.htm, Statistics Canada, e-Stat Japan.

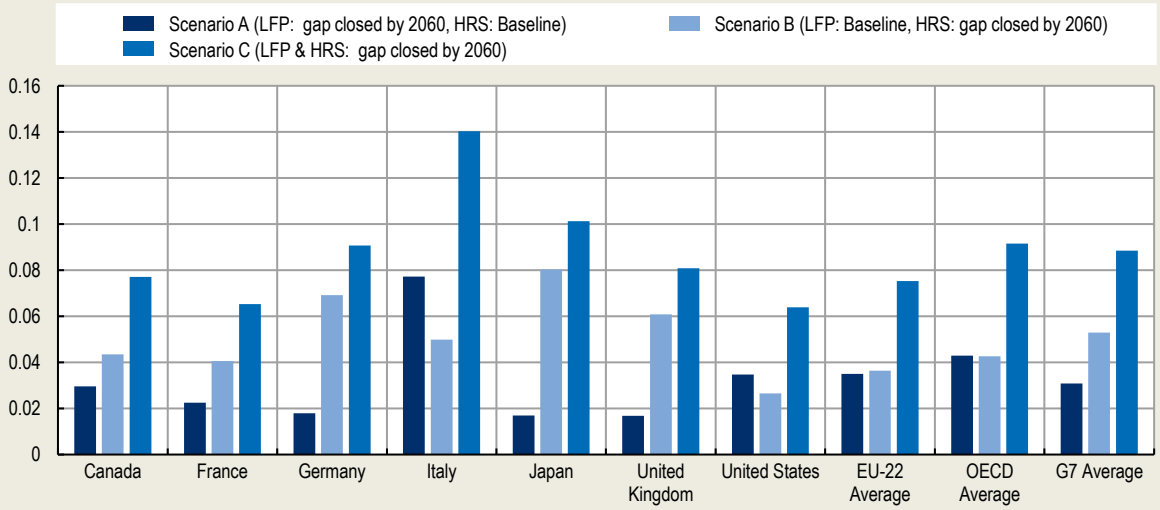
Fostering gender equality is both a social and economic imperative. Existing gaps in employment participation limit economic potential by not fully tapping into the vast talent pool of women and their productivity potential. Should G7 countries close their gender gaps in labour force participation and working hours by 2060, they could expect a substantial boost of economic growth (Box 3).

Box 3. The potential growth effects of gender equality in employment in G7 countries

Across the G7, closing the remaining gender gap in labour force participation by 2060 could increase potential GDP per capita growth by 3.1% by 2060 relative to a situation which assumes a continuity of the initial institutional and policy settings over the projection period (Figure 3). By far the biggest effects can be expected in Italy, where the gender gaps in labour force participation are largest today. Because differences in working hours are more pronounced in most G7 countries, closing such gender gaps holds even more potential. In fact, closing working hours gaps by 2060 could result in a 4.3% boost to GDP in 2060. The United States and France, where gaps in working hours are comparatively small, are the only G7 countries that would benefit 4% or less by 2060. Combining a closure of gender gaps in working hours with a closure of the gap in labour force participation would lead to a 7.8% boost to GDP in 2060.

Figure 3. Gains in economic growth from closing gender participation and working hours gaps

Difference relative to the baseline in projected potential GDP per capita in 2060, closure of gender gaps in labour force participation and working hours, percent



Note: The projections assume that labour force participation and working hours gaps close by 2060. LFP: Labour force participation, HRS: Working hours. For detail, see Fluchtmann, Keese, and Adema (2024[19]), *forthcoming*.
Source: OECD estimates based on the OECD Employment database, www.oecd.org/employment/emp/employmentdatabase-employment.htm and the OECD Long-Term Growth Mode, www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/b4f4e03e-en.pdf?expires=1633010984&id=id&accname=ocid84004878&checksum=AB7261FA5FDE3F4328C8F16C7B41FD6D.

Labour force and employment participation gaps may have narrowed, but one of the reasons for their persistence is that women continue to bear an unequal burden of unpaid care- and household work. Women in most G7 counties spend about 90 minutes per day more on unpaid work than men, but this gender gap is almost three hours per day in Japan and Italy (G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps 2023 Indicator 5a.). During the COVID-19 pandemic, mothers also took on the brunt of the additional unpaid care work – and experienced additional labour market penalties and stress (Queisser, 2021[2]). The gender

imbalance in unpaid work is rooted in the persistence of social norms that cast women as the primary caregivers, while workplace conditions often make it challenging for women to reconcile career and family responsibilities. Unpaid care and housework may not be renumerated, its value is sizeable and estimated to amount to between 20 and 50% of GDP on average in G7 countries, depending on the used estimation approach (OECD, 2021[20]; van de Ven, Zwijnenburg and De Queljoe, 2018[21]).

Furthermore, the demands for formal and informal care for relatives with care needs will increase with population ageing. Across 21 European OECD countries for which comparable data is available, 26% of people over 65 who report severe limitations in activities of daily living receive no care, 28% receive formal care only, 24% receive a combination of formal and informal care, and 22% receive only family care, and women are the main caregivers in this regard (OECD, 2023[22]). There are major concerns about access to good quality elderly care services now and in the future. Productivity gains can help address capacity issues, but a comprehensive policy strategy is needed to tackle poor pay[2] and working conditions (see below) and insufficient social recognition of long-term care work to attract workers in the sector and avoid labour shortages reaching unacceptable levels. It is unlikely that all care requirements will be addressed by formal care in future, nor may this be desirable from a client's or carers perspective. However, there is a risk that women will be increasingly burdened with informal care, which is why a special focus should be placed on reconciling informal care and work.

G7 countries have committed to removing barriers to women's full participation in the labour market (e.g. G7 Charlevoix Summit (2018[10])). Labour market barriers often coincide with the presence of children in households. Therefore, it is important for countries to provide a well-aligned system of family supports over the early years of a child's life, so that establishing and supporting a family as well as pursuing labour market opportunities is a realistic life-choice for both parents in all their diversity. Such a "continuum of supports" generally comprises a system of well-paid and sufficiently (but not overly) long parental leaves that also incentivise the uptake of leave by fathers (and/or partners), widely accessible and affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) from an early age so that parents can seamlessly transition from parental leave taking to making use of childcare services, and possibly flexible working arrangements too. The following section reviews the status quo and the policy actions taken by G7 countries in recent years.

2.1.1. Parental leave policies and incentives for a more gender equal use

Employment-protected and paid leave entitlements around childbirth are a central feature of family policy approaches in most G7 countries. Such leave entitlements – usually administered through maternity- paternity- and parental leaves – protect the health and well-being of infants and mothers around childbirth and allow parents to take leave of absence from work to provide care for their children in the early years of life (for same-sex couples, they generally provide paid leave for the biological or adoptive parent and, among G7 countries, in most cases also for her/his partner[3] (OECD Family Database, Indicator PF2.6). Through employment protection, fathers and mothers can return to work after taking leave, while leave benefits and allowances ensure that parents are financially supported throughout their absence from work. However, overly long family leave entitlements can have negative consequences for worker's human capital development and career progression (Fluchtmann, 2023[23]).

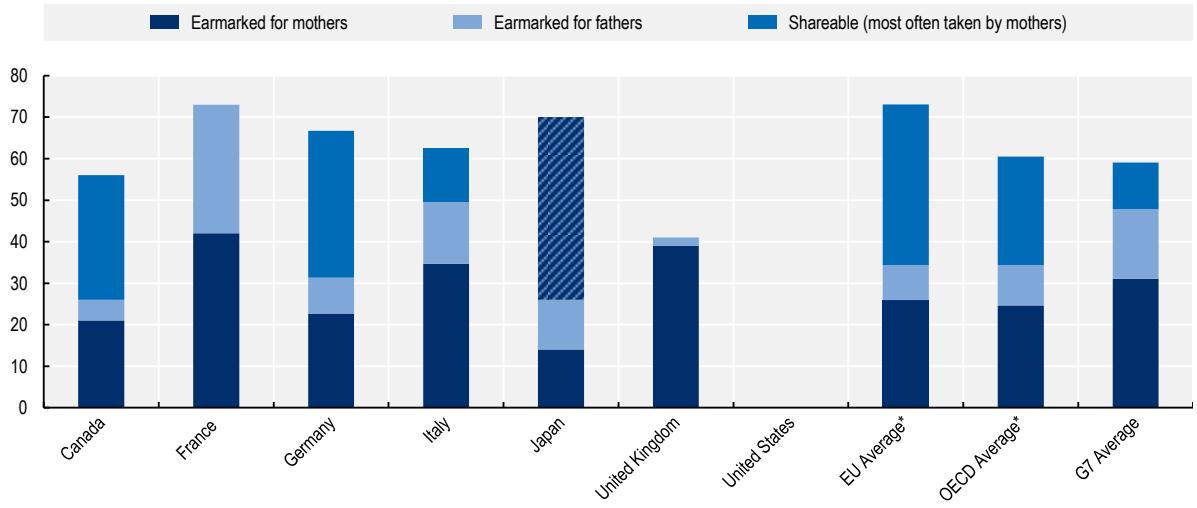
[2] Across the OECD on average, personal care workers employed in residential and non-residential care earn around 70% of the economy-wide average hourly wage. One-quarter of personal care workers in the LTC sector and in hospitals earn at most 53% and 60%, respectively, of the average wage in the total economy (OECD, 2023[22]).

[3] As the formal recognition of same-sex marriages or partnerships expands across countries, there is increasing recognition of same-sex partners within parental leave legislation. In most G7 countries, parental leave is extended to female as well as male same-sex parents, as well as in 14 out of 27 EU countries (OECD Family Database, Indicator PF2.6).

As of April 2022, six G7 countries offer national/federal paid parental leave around childbirth and for the early months and years of a child's life (OECD Family Database, Indicator PF2.1). The **United States** is the only country without a national paid leave entitlement, though 12 states and territories offer all or some employees the statutory right to income support during leave, while parents may also have access to employer-provided leave benefits.[4] In 2021, with the 'Gender-Data Expansion' project, the United States supported further efforts towards closing gender data gaps in the policy areas of digitalisation, teleworking, taxation and child-related leave to support women's economic empowerment (see (OECD, 2023[24]) on the US supported "gender data expansion project"). On average across the G7, about half of all parental leave entitlements in G7 countries are reserved for exclusive use by mothers (31 weeks) – through maternity leave and/or earmarked parental leave entitlements – and 17 weeks for exclusive use by fathers – through paternity leave and/or reserved parental leave periods.

Figure 4. The United States is the only G7 country without national paid parental leave entitlements

Duration of earmarked and shareable parental leave entitlements, in weeks, 2023*



Note: Except for OECD and EU averages, which refer to April 2022, information here refers to maternity-, paternity-, home care- and parental leave in pace as of September 2023. Periods labelled "mother only" and "father only" refer to individual non-transferable entitlements for paid employment-protected leave of absence for employed parents, "mummy and daddy quotas" or periods of an overall leave entitlement that can be used only by one parent and cannot be transferred to the other, as well as any weeks of shareable leave that must be taken by one or both parents for the family to qualify for "bonus" weeks of parental leave. Weeks of shareable leave refer to parental- and home care leave entitlements that can be freely shared between mothers and fathers. Subject to fulfilling eligibility criteria, parental leave in Japan is an individual non-transferable retirement for fathers and mothers that can be taken until a child is 12 months old. However, the leave can be extended until the child is 14 months old if both parents take some of the leave, even though each parent is only entitled to 12 months after birth. The bar is therefore shaded.
Source: OECD Family Database, www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf.

Non-transferable periods of parental leave for exclusive use by the mother or father on a "use it or lose it" basis, are often implemented to encourage more sharing of leave entitlements among parents – and in some countries they have been relatively successful at that. Among OECD countries, Iceland has gone as far as providing equal leave entitlements of 6 months per parent/partner of which only 6 weeks can be

[4] The nature of schemes varies, but in 2022, publicly stipulated paid leave provisions that could be used around childbirth were available in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington State, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Also, federal employees are entitled to 12 weeks of paid parental leave at the birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child.

transferred to the other partner (Fluchtmann, 2023[23]). However, mothers still use the vast majority of paid parental leave entitlements in G7 countries and also take leave for longer periods than fathers (OECD Family Database, Indicator PF2.2). Indeed, fathers (or partners) never make up more than a quarter of paid parental leave recipients – except for in the United States, where much of paid parental leave is part of employer-provided schemes and fathers make up about 38% of paid leave users. However, even where fathers make up 40% of the users of parental leave in OECD countries, such as in Iceland, Norway, Portugal and Sweden – they only use about a quarter of the available days (OECD Family Database, Indicator PF2.2).

In some countries, earmarked entitlements take the form of 'bonus' months or weeks, that offer additional weeks of paid leave if both parents use a certain portion paid leave entitlement. In practice, this means that a certain number of weeks are effectively 'reserved' for fathers or the 'second parents' if parents want to maximise their time on leave. For example, since 2007, households in **Germany** are entitled to two extra months of parental leave for the partner/father if they used at least two months of this leave. Fathers' involvement in paid parental leave taking has risen substantially since the introduction of bonus months and in 2020 the share of fathers among all benefit recipients stood at 43.7% (2020) – (Blum, Reimer and Schober, 2022[25]; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023[26]). **Canada** introduced bonus weeks in 2019, granting an additional five weeks of benefits under the standard option if each parent uses at least 5 weeks of leave, and an additional eight weeks of benefits is available under the extended option if each parent uses at least 8 weeks of leave (Doucet et al., 2022[27]).[5] In Canada, paternal leave use increased following the introduction of bonus weeks and is now at 24% in provinces other than Quebec (OECD Family Database, Indicator PF2.2).

In **Japan**, mothers and fathers have an individual entitlement of about one year, in addition to two bonus months if both parents take some of the leave. While currently only 17% of fathers make use parental leave, the number of fathers on leave has been increasing over recent years. To further promote paternal engagement in parental leave taking, the Japanese Government has set ambitious targets in 2023, expanding further targets to a goal of 50% of fathers to take parental leave by 2025, and 85% by 2030 (Japan's Prime Minister's Office, 2023[28]). Since April 2023, employers with over 1 000 employees must also annually report on the share of male workers eligible for leave as well as the share that take it. Moreover, as part of the ongoing efforts to incentivise paternity leave, Japan introduced a four-week paid paternity leave in October 2022 (Nakazato, Nishimura and Takezawa, 2022[29]).

Japan, France and Italy provide both parents with individual and non-transferable paid parental leave entitlements. In **France**, the individual parental leave entitlements introduced in 2014, were further refined in 2015. Since then, each parent can receive 6 months of paid leave for their first child. For any child born subsequently, one parent can take up to 24 months, while the other parent has a dedicated 12-month leave reserved. However, partially because of low flat-rate leave benefits, fathers only make up 4% of leave users. Paid paternity leave was extended from 2 to 5 weeks in 2021 (Boyer and Fagnani, 2022[30]). Since August 2022, parental leave in **Italy** includes three months of paid leave entitlements for each parent alongside three months of shareable leave, while paternity leave has been successively increased from 1 to 10 days between 2016 and 2021. Prior to the parental leave reform, Italian fathers made up about 22% of leave users (Addabbo et al., 2022[31]). Recent budget law establishes a higher percentage of paid leave allowances from 30% up to 80% of the salary for a maximum duration of one month of leave and up to the sixth year of the child's life.

Employed mothers in the **United Kingdom** can transfer up to 50 weeks of maternity leave (and 37 weeks of pay) to the father, and this period of leave is termed 'Shared Parental leave' (UK Government, 2023[32]).

[5] In Canada, paid maternity- and parental leave entitlements are generally provided through the *Employment Insurance* scheme. However, the province of Québec has its own scheme – the *Québec Parental Insurance Plan*, which offers more generous leave benefits and also provides for paid paternity leave.

But otherwise, the United Kingdom does not provide paid parental leave, and only reserves 2 weeks of paid leave for fathers through paternity leave (Koslowski et al., 2022[33]).

Significant changes in non-transferable leave entitlements for fathers or partners have also been spurred on by efforts of **EU countries** to align with the EU Directive on Work-Life Balance (*Directive 2019/1158/EU*), which postulates a minimum of 10 working days paternity leave for fathers as well as an individual right to four months paid parental leave of which at least two months need to be non-transferable to the partner. The stipulations in the directive had to be implemented by August 2022 (EU, 2019[34]).

2.1.2. Affordable and accessible quality childcare

After entitlements to paid parental leave expire, participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is essential for both parents to be in paid work and ensure greater gender equality in labour market outcomes (Alajääskö and Fluchtmann, 2023[35]) and (Sikirić, 2021[36])).

Enrolment in ECEC facilities differs widely across G7 countries, particularly for children under the age of three (OECD Family Database, Indicator PF3.2). This reflects differences in availability, affordability and norms concerning the provision of childcare in -or outside the home. In some G7 countries, the net (out-of-pocket) childcare costs for parents are high, despite supports such as subsidised access to public ECEC facilities, cash supports and/or tax reliefs (G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps, Indicator 5b). In recent years, initiatives in G7 countries towards extending ECEC-participation, frequently concerned extending compulsory "schooling" to younger children and fiscal commitments to expand ECEC capacity.

Recent progress towards increasing ECEC availability was also made in the context of the policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, with the *Recovery and Resilience Plan*, **Italy** – where enrolment among children aged 0 to 2 has remained low (26%) – has committed investments to create about 264 000 new ECEC places by 2026 (Eurydice, 2023[37]). The **United States** – where only about two-thirds of children 3-5 year-olds are enrolled in childcare facilities – committed USD 24 billion of the 2021 *American Rescue Plan Act* for childcare business grants by 2023, aiming to increase the capacity and quality of the sector (Quinton, 2022[38]). **Germany**'s **COVID-19** response also committed EUR 1 billion with the intention to create 90 000 new ECEC places between 2020 and 2022 (Eurydice, 2023[39]).

France has one of the highest ECEC-enrolment rates for children aged 0-2, and coverage mostly concerns "*assistantes maternelles*" providing ECEC services at home. Since 2019 children in **France** are legally required to attend pre-school (*écoles maternelles*) from age three onwards, and ECEC-enrolment rates 3-5 year-olds are close to 100% (Alajääskö and Fluchtmann, 2023[35]). Since 2013, **Germany** has a statutory right to an ECEC place from age one (previously age three). However, despite these entitlements and strong increases in enrolment – 38% of 0-2 year-olds and of 94% of 3-5 year-olds in 2020 – there is still a substantial gap between supply and demand as forecasts expect a lack of 384 000 ECEC spaces in 2023 – about 13% of current enrolment (Stein, Bock-Famulla and Girndt, 2022[40]). Denmark, Norway and Sweden grant a statutory right to an ECEC-place as from 6 to 12 months of age, which contributes to particularly high ECEC enrolment rates in these countries (OECD, 2023[41]).[6]

Back in 2002, the European Council established the Barcelona Targets with the intention of raising the availability of ECEC to boost female labour force engagement in the **European Union**. The targets aim for an enrolment rate of 33% for children under 3 years of age and 90% for children from the age of 3 up to compulsory schooling age by 2010. In 2022, the European Council adopted an upward revision of the targets to 45% among under 3 year-olds – with specific targets for countries that have yet to reach the

[6] Denmark grants a statutory right to a place in a day-care facility from 26 weeks of age, while municipalities face financial sanctions if they do not provide such a place. Sweden and Norway offer an ECEC guarantee from age one and parents can file complaints with the municipality or school inspectorate for non-compliance.

2002 goals – and 96% from the age of 3 up to compulsory schooling age, to be reached by 2030 (European Commission, 2022[42]).

High childcare costs for parents can strongly reduce their financial incentives to participate in the workforce and/or work (more hours). For low-earning couples (and single parent families in the United States) with two young children, ECEC costs can be a substantial barrier in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States (OECD Tax and Benefit Models, 2022). Targeted supports for those who would otherwise be unable to afford ECEC is critical to advance gender equality (e.g. Van Lancker (2017[43])).

Across the G7, there is a plethora of childcare support programmes with the aim of reducing costs for low-income earners and families in vulnerable situations. For example, under the Act on *Good Childhood Education and Care and the Childcare Quality Act* **Germany**'s Federal Government provides Länder (federal states, who have authority over the education and care system) with EUR 9.5 billion between 2019 and 2024, aimed at increasing quality and supporting families through ECEC subsidies (Eurydice, 2023[39]). In 2019, **Japan** introduced the right to free ECEC for 3-5 year-olds in 2019 and exempts children aged 0 to 2 from low-income households from ECEC fees as well (Nakazato, Nishimura and Takezawa, 2022[29]). Nevertheless, less than a third of the latter are enrolled in ECEC. Between 2024 and 2025, the **United Kingdom** (England)[7] plans to successively extend the 15 hours of free childcare per week for all 3-4 year-olds – which were introduced in 2010 – to all children of working parents under the age of five, while the entitlement is also planned increase to 30h per week (The Education Hub, 2023[44]). With 45% among 0-2 year-olds and 100% among of 3-5 year-olds, attendance is already relatively high. In addition to the above-mentioned childcare business grants, the **United States** also committed USD 15 billion in ECEC supports through the 2021 *American Rescue Plan Act*, with earlier support through the 2020 *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* as well (Quinton, 2022[38]). For low-income and vulnerable families, these supports are, for example, available through the *Head Start* programme.[8]

Canada is currently undertaking a big push to extend ECEC coverage. Between 2021 and 2026, the government is rolling out a country-wide *Early Learning and Childcare System* which, among other things, includes a guarantee for a fee of maximum CAD 10 a day in licensed childcare facilities and the creation of 250 000 new ECEC spaces by 2026. Overall investment involves a commitment of up to CAD 30 billion spread over a period of 5 years, which, alongside previous investments announced since 2015, will sum to a yearly allocation of CAD 9.2 billion for the ECEC reform (Government of Canada, 2023[45]). By the end of 2022, this reform targeted a 50% reduction in average ECEC fees towards a fee of CAD 10 a day on average in 2026 in all provinces other than Québec. The province of Québec had already made licenced ECEC available for CAD 5 a day in 1997. The province Québec saw impressive increases in maternal employment in the years following childcare reform, with an estimated boost of 1.7% to the provinces GDP and substantial net fiscal returns of close to CAD 1 billion (Cleveland, 2022[46]; Fortin, Godbout and St-Cerny, 2013[47]).

2.1.3. Flexible working arrangements

Flexible working allows employed parents to adjust their paid work hours to accommodate caregiving responsibilities. This can improve workers' well-being and productivity, especially when workers exercise some control over working conditions, but it may also carry a stigma around the level of commitment to the job (Chung, 2020[48]). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, teleworking has emerged as a more prominent flexible working arrangement. Before the pandemic, about 10% of men and women in

[7] Authority over Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is devolved to the four nations in the United Kingdom: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, resulting in considerable diversity in ECEC policy (Atkinson, O'Brian and Koslowski, 2022[196]).

[8] Other support programmes include the *Childcare and Development Fund* (CCDF), the *Social Services Block Grant* (SSBG) and the *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families* (TANF).

G7 countries used regular or irregular teleworking arrangements but this surged to about 40% at the height of the pandemic (OECD, 2021[49]). Teleworking has the potential to help workers improve their work/life balance and increase job satisfaction through increased autonomy and reduced commuting times. However, it can also increase work intensity and unpaid overtime hours and contribute to social and professional isolation. Pre-pandemic evidence suggested that an increase in the number of men who telework may help reduce the gender care gap. Encouraging men to view teleworking as a family-friendly arrangement could help foster a more equal sharing of household work (Touzet, 2023[50]).

Some G7 countries have recently introduced, reinforced and/or adapted their flexible working regulations. For example, in 2017, **Italy** introduced an enforceable right to request *occasional* teleworking and the regulation of "agile working" (or smart working), including a right to disconnect. The regulations have since been updated in 2022, now requiring individual agile work agreements to be made with every worker. All public sector workers also have individual agile work agreements, but the majority of working days must be spent in the office. Private sector workers with children under the age of 14 are granted a statutory right to agile work (Lavoro, 2022[51]). While currently not having a regulated right to teleworking, **Germany** introduced a right to reduce contractual working time for a fixed period (from 1 to 5 years) in 2019, covering workers with minimum of 6-month tenure in companies with more than 45 employees. Employers can only refuse on legitimate business grounds, while those who employ less than 200 workers only have to grant a reduction of working time to 1 in 15 workers (Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales, 2019[52]). In **France**, teleworking is regulated in the labour code since 2012, granting workers a right to request telework. However, employers can refuse such requests on various ground, making it in practice unenforceable (OECD, 2021[49]). By mid-2023, France has not yet transposed the right to request flexible working arrangements for working parents.

The **United Kingdom** has an enforceable right to request flexible working for all workers with at least six months' tenure, which was introduced in 2003 and expanded in 2007 and in 2014 (UK Government, 2014[53]). This includes a variety of different forms of flexible working, such as job sharing, teleworking, part-time work, compressed hours and flexitime, among others. Applications can only be rejected by employers for legitimate business reasons and existing health and safety regulations extend to telework. While there have been no recent reforms, the government is planning to remove the six-month qualifying period (DBEI, 2022[54]).

In 2019, **Canada** introduced a right to request flexible work arrangements for federally regulated employees, which make up about 6% of the workforce. This allows to request a change in the location of work and/or an adjustment of working hours in terms of scheduling or total hours worked, which can only be denied on legitimate business grounds (Government of Canada, 2022[55]).[9] After introducing teleworking guidelines in 2018, **Japan** amended guidelines in 2021 to better reflect practical concerns in a transition to a teleworking arrangements, particularly following the rapid shift to work-from-home for many workers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, 2021[56]). Nevertheless, Japan does not grant workers a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements so far. Similarly, the **United States** do not have a federal statutory right to request flexible working arrangements and have not made noticeable amendments to federal flexible work regulations in recent years.[10]

[9] Additional changes in legislation have been made within provincial labour codes, under which most workers are covered. For example, the *Working for Workers Act 2021* enshrined a right to disconnect in companies with 25 or more employees in the labour code of Ontario in order the reduce the blurring of boundaries between work and private life (Government of Ontario, 2021[197]).

[10] Relevant regulations can be developed at local level. For example, New Hampshire and Vermont have implemented laws that grant a right to request flexible working arrangements; at municipal level, Berkeley, New York City and San Francisco have introduced similar regulations.

EU countries had to align with the EU Directive on Work-Life Balance (*Directive 2019/1158/EU*), which prescribed that working parents of children up to eight years old had to receive the right to request flexible working arrangements, such as remote work, flexible schedules, or reduced working hours by August 2022 (EU, 2019[34]). This right can be subject to a maximum service qualification period of 6 months, and employers may only refuse the request for sufficient business reasons.

2.2. Policies to reduce gender pay gaps and improve women's leadership in public and private sectors

Taormina G7 Leaders' Communiqué (2017), Paragraph 18

"... Although girls and women today are better educated than ever before, they are still more likely to be employed in low-skilled and low-paying jobs, carry most of the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, and their participation and leadership in private and public life aswell as their access to economic opportunities remains uneven.... We therefore remain committed to mainstreaming gender equality into all our policies....""

Charlevoix G7 Summit Communiqué (2018), Paragraph 2

"...We are committed to removing the barriers that keep our citizens, including women and marginalized individuals, from participating fully in the global economy. We endorse the Charlevoix Commitment on Equality and Economic Growth, which reinforces our commitment to eradicate poverty, advance gender equality, foster income equality, ensure better access to financial resources, and create decent work and quality of life for all...."

The inequalities in labour force participation and working hours across the life course contribute to employed women on average earning less than men while they are also less likely to reach leadership positions in public and private sectors. This limits women's financial independence and security and increases the likelihood of women experiencing poverty in old age due to lower lifetime earnings, pension contributions and savings.

On average across the G7, the gender wage gap (GWG) measured at median earnings for full-time workers stands at about 14% (G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps 2023 Indicator 4). Gender pay gaps have a strong intersectional bearing, and women belonging to minority groups (for example belonging to marginalised groups and indigenous peoples have lower earnings than women on average (Box 4). The GWG among top female and male earners is almost twice as large (OECD Gender Portal).

Women are also often more likely to work in occupations that pay well below-average wages – even when factors such age, education and sector are taken into account. A prominent example is the long-term and elderly care sector, in which about 9 in 10 employees are women. Across G7 countries with available data, employees in this sector are only paid two-thirds of the economy-wide average hourly wage (OECD, 2023[22]).

Across G7 countries on average, women make up 35% of the board seats of the largest publicly listed companies and 37% of senior managers in the public sector (OECD, 2023[1]). Women still have difficulty getting through the glass ceiling and when they do, they are, on average, paid less than their male peers in senior positions. More gender equality in decision-making positions is likely to have positive spill-over effects on board dynamics and governance with a wider range of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and problem-solving skills. Equity, productivity, and innovation objectives together underline the need for policy to help employers reduce pay gaps in the workplace and sustain and further develop policies that help them to reduce discriminatory gender pay gaps, such as pay transparency tools and gender pay audits (OECD, 2022[57]; OECD, 2023[58]).

Box 4. The intersectional dimension of wage disparities

Wage disparities are not solely a matter of gender, but also pervasively affect ethnic minorities and LGBTIQA+ populations and women therein. Systemic biases and structural inequities contribute to these groups often earning less than their peers. However, for different reasons data is not available in all G7 countries (Box 2), complicating the cross-national measurement of wage-disparities vis-a-vis majority populations.

When data is available, it highlights significant gaps in earnings between majority and minority populations. For example, in Canada, members of indigenous peoples or visible minority populations often have lower earnings than members of the majority population. For example, average hourly earnings of Filipino Canadians can be as much as 26% lower than those of Canadians not part of a visible minority or indigenous peoples, while this gap for Black Canadians is about 16% (Statistics Canada, 2022[59]). The median hourly pay gap between White and ethnic minority groups is as low as 2% in the United Kingdom (England and Wales), but it varies widely across ethnic minority groups and can be as large as 15% for Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic minorities (Office for National Statistics, 2020[60]). Pay differentials with other groups also affect employees self-identifying as LGBTQ+ (OECD, 2020[61]; forthcoming[62]).

However, such inequalities also intersect with gender, insomuch that Hispanic and Black women in the United States earn only about USD 0.57 to USD 0.64, respectively, for every US Dollar earned by a White, non-Hispanic man (Bleiweis, Frye and Khattar, 2021[16]).

Note: Reference to majority and minority populations is made according to specific national conventions reported in the statistics of the data source.

2.2.1. Pay transparency measures to reduce gender pay gaps among similarly skilled workers

Pay transparency and wage mapping policies aim to draw attention to inequalities in pay between men and women, in particular within firms. The goal of these initiatives is to support firms in preventing and addressing pay inequality, to provide employees and their representatives with more knowledge to discuss and reduce gender pay gaps and help governments to determine the best ways to address gender wage inequalities. For eliminating the discriminatory wage gap, or the portion of the gender wage gap that cannot be attributable to observable worker characteristics, such as educational attainment, pay transparency initiatives can be particularly helpful (OECD, 2023[58]; 2021[63]).

Most pay transparency measures have only recently been implemented and evaluations are still scarce. However, initial evidence suggests that the effectiveness of pay transparency tools depends on different factors, including robust enforcement, active third-party involvement, and public visibility. For example, Denmark, which operates with annual gender-segregated pay reports based on pre-existing information provided by the national statistical office, has seen a reduction in gender pay gaps by about 2 percentage points, mostly due to a suppression in the growth of male wages. In countries where pay transparency measures are “weaker” they seem to have had a more limited effect. The design, implementation, and the broader cultural and institutional context co-determine the effectiveness of pay transparency policies (OECD, 2023[58]; 2021[63]).

Over recent years, most G7 countries have introduced some form of pay transparency measures. In 2023, the **United States** had no nation-wide pay transparency legislation, while employer reporting on the gender composition of the workforce is mandatory (OECD, 2023[58]). At the federal level, the US Government is in the process of enacting new policies that prohibit the federal government and federal contractors from considering salary history during the pay setting process (The White House, 2021[64]; The White House,

2022[65]; U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2023[66]). At the state level, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Rhode Island and Washington have introduced laws that prohibit employers from asking candidates about their past salaries during the recruitment process to prevent the continuation of historical wage disparities. As of 17 September 2023, New York State businesses with four or more employees are required to list compensation ranges for designated job opportunities, promotions, and transfers (New York State - Department of Labor, 2023[67]).

Canada's *Pay Equity Act*, introduced in 2018 and in force since 2021, mandates that federally-regulated employers follow a five-step equal pay plan to ensure equitable wages by comparing and adjusting compensation between female and male job classes performing work of equal or comparable value (OECD, 2023[58]; 2021[63]). However, this legislation covers only about 6% of the overall workforce. Individual provinces have also developed their own pay transparency laws in recent years.[11]

Among G7 countries, **Italy** was the first to introduce comprehensive pay transparency measures with the *Equal Opportunities Code* of 2006. While previously applying to employers with 100 or more employees, the *Gender Equality Act* of 2021 expanded these requirements to include all public and private employers with 50 or more employees. Every two years, employers must prepare a comprehensive report including gender-disaggregated data on annual gross remuneration, hiring, promotion and termination rates, training rates, and parental leave uptake (companies with less than 50 workers can prepare such reporting on a voluntary basis). Companies with significant gender gaps must devise and implement an adequate plan to eliminate such disparities. Failure to do so, or non-compliance with reporting regulations, can lead to financial penalties (OECD, 2023[58]; 2021[63]). In 2021, with the Recovery and Resilience Plan, Italy introduced the gender equality certification system for enterprises to encourage greater inclusion of women in the labour market and to ensure a higher quality of women's work, promoting transparency on business processes, reducing the "gender pay gap"', increasing opportunities for growth in the company and support work/life balance. The system is based on the definition of guidelines and related incentives for companies that successfully conclude the certification process. The certification process was fully functional in July 2022 and as of 4 October 2023 there are 588 certified companies. In 2023, a self-discipline' code was set up for companies who want to be more socially responsible and contribute to supporting family-friendly workplace conditions The code focuses on three areas, supporting mothers' career continuity, health prevention and care, and adaptation of working time and work methods.

The **United Kingdom** implemented pay reporting requirements with the *Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations* in 2017, which mandates private and public sector employers with 250 or more employees to disclose information on the differences in pay and the distribution of men and women across pay quartiles on a government website dedicated to pay gap reporting (UK Government, 2023[68]). While there are no direct penalties for non-compliance, the Equality and Human Rights Commission can instigate legal action against non-compliant employers, potentially resulting in unlimited fines. Several studies have found that pay transparency rules in the United Kingdom have led to a slight narrowing of the gender pay gap and to more women-friendly hiring practices (OECD, 2023[58]; 2021[63]). Also in 2017, **Germany** introduced the *Transparency in Wage Structures Act*, which allows employees in establishments with a workforce that usually consists of over 200 employees with the same employer to request information inter alia on the average monthly gross remuneration of colleagues performing similar work or work of equal value. Employers with a workforce that usually consists of more than 500 employees who are required to file a management report must regularly disclose gender disaggregated data on total, full-time, and part-time employees as well as their efforts to foster gender equality and equal pay, though no sanction exists for non-compliance. The Act encourages private employers with a workforce that usually

[11] For example, in May 2023, British Columbia enacted legislation that requires public and private employers to prepare annual pay transparency reports and mandates that employers cannot inquire about pay history while also posting salary expectations in job advertisements. Mandatory reporting is scheduled to be introduced in stages and by 2026 will also apply to companies with 50 employees or more.

consist of more than 500 employees to use internal company evaluation procedures to assess their remuneration provisions and components on a regular basis, but at present it doesn't require reporting on wage gaps (OECD, 2023[58]; 2021[63]).

Since 2019, **France** requires public and private employers with at least 50 employees to conduct an annual gender pay audit under the *'Professional Equality Index between Women and Men'* (PEI) and publish the results on their websites. The PEI evaluates companies based on five factors: average pay gaps by age and job category, rates of individual pay increases, promotion rates, pay increases post-maternity leave, and gender representation among the highest paid employees. Companies scoring less than 75 out of a possible 100 points must implement corrective measures to raise their score within a maximum of three years and face potential financial penalties amounting to up to 1% of their payroll for non-compliance or consistently low scores. There is descriptive evidence indicating a narrowing wage gap following these regulations (OECD, 2023[58]; 2021[63]). Legislation introduced in July 2023 creates a similar PEI for public employers and will go into effect from the end of the year.

The **Japanese** *Act on Promotion of Women's Participation* has mandated yearly gender-disaggregated pay reporting from private employers with 301+ employees since July 2022. In addition to reporting on pay gaps, this also includes details about female representation and the development of a work-family balance-friendly environment. Since 2023, companies with 101-300 employees must report on at least one of these latter two metrics. Non-compliance may result in public naming by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare or local bureaus (OECD, 2023[58]).

Adopted in 2023, the **European Union**'s Pay Transparency Directive (*Directive 2023/970/EU*) requires that job applicants must be provided gender-neutral pay information before an interview, while employers cannot inquire about past salaries. The Directive also requires employers with at least 100 employees to report pay information, with a requirement for pay assessments if a gender pay gap of 5% or more is detected and not rectified. Member states have until 2026 to transpose the Directive into national law and must set down precise sanctions for infringement of these rules, including fines (European Union, 2023[69]; OECD, 2023[58]).

2.2.2. Voluntary targets and mandatory quotas to promote women in leadership

G7 countries have implemented various measures to develop the pipeline for female talent and boost women's presence on boards and in senior positions in the public and private sector. These strategies include disclosure mandates, quotas, and targets, as well as other legislative initiatives targeted at improving board and management diversity. In the short and medium term, voluntary targets and mandatory quotas have often been used to help to close gender gaps in pay and representation in leadership positions – especially when they are enforced with the threat of sanctions for non-compliance – but they are not a long-term fix.

Private sector

Except for Canada,[12] all G7 countries have introduced voluntary targets or mandatory quotas to promote women's presence in leadership in the private sector. Quotas are more likely to be met quickly than suggested targets but are only used in three G7 countries. For example, introduced in 2011 and binding since 2017, **France** requires at least 40% women on corporate boards for listed companies as well as for companies that either have revenues or assets above EUR 50 million or employ more than 500 persons for three consecutive years. In 2022, France also introduced a quota of 30% women among senior executives and management board members for companies with more than 1 000 employees, to be reached by 2026. This will be extended to a 40% quota in 2029 and needs to be reached by 2031. Non-compliant companies face sanctions, ranging from annulled board appointments, withheld board

[12] In the province of Québec, crown corporations must have gender parity on boards following 2006 legislation.

attendance fees and fines up to 1% of the company's payroll (Denis, 2022[70]). At 45% France has the highest representation of women on boards on listed companies in the G7, just slightly behind the leading OECD country Iceland (Denis, 2022[70]).

After requiring listed companies to reserve at least 20% of corporate board seats for the underrepresented sex with the first board appointment from August 2012, and a minimum of 30% for both with the second appointment, **Italy** expanded the quota to a minimum of 40% of women on boards of listed companies in 2020 and has reached a 43% representation of women on boards in 2022 (G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps 2023, Indicator 8. This quota is set to apply for six successive terms of board appointments, a total of 18 years. Companies that do not comply can receive fines ranging from EUR 100 000 to EUR 1 million and risk that future board appointments may be invalidated. In 2015, **Germany** passed a law requiring publicly listed companies subject to equal co-determination (>2000 employees) to have at least 30% of the underrepresented sex on their supervisory boards. In 2021, and with a transitional implementation period of 12 months, Germany extended the prescriptions by requiring publicly listed companies subject to equal co-determination to appoint at least one woman to the executive board if it consists of more than three persons (Denis, 2022[70]).

Four G7 countries have introduced voluntary targets towards board diversity. In 2020, **Japan** set a target of 12% of female executives by 2022 for companies listed in the first section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange. By the end of 2023, Japan will establish an outcome goal up to 2025 concerning the ratio of female executives in the (total) number of executives at companies listed on the Prime Market. Based on the Basic Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women 2023, the following provisions were included in the Tokyo Stock Exchange's regulations in October 2023: (i) Each company listed on the Prime Market shall strive to appoint at least one female executive by 2025; (ii) Each company listed on the Prime Market shall aim to raise the ratio of female executives to 30% or more by 2030; and, (iii) Each company listed on the Prime Market is recommended to formulate its action plan to achieve the aforementioned goals (Government of Japan, 2023[71]).

The **United Kingdom** introduced a target of at least 25% of women on the boards of the 100 largest FTSE-listed companies in 2011, to be reached by 2015. Between 2016 and 2022 this was successively further extended to 40% of women, and one director of minority ethnic background, on the boards of the 350 FTSE-listed companies, to be reached by 2025.[13] Both Japan and the United Kingdom do not have any sanctions for non-compliance with these targets, but the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange have jointly been selecting "*Nadeshiko Brands*" labels to highlight listed companies that actively promote women on boards and in senior managerial positions (Denis, 2022[70]). In 2022, the United Kingdom reached its goal among the largest listed companies (G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps 2023, Indicator 8), but Japan remains at a low level compared to other countries, and it will have to further efforts to increase the ratio of female executives.

The United States has implemented targets for female representation of boards of some companies and combines these with sanctions in case of non-compliance or failure to justify zero-targets. Since 2021, the **United States** have a target of at least two diverse directors – only one of which would need to be a woman, while the other must be from another under-represented minority – for NASDAQ-listed companies.[14] If there are five or fewer directors on the board, there only needs to be at least one diverse director. The targets are set to be implemented by 2025, with an intermediary goal of at least one diverse director by 2023. Companies that do not comply with these targets have to provide a justification or else face sanctions. For co-determined (>500 employees) or listed companies that are not already subject to mandatory quotas, **Germany** requires voluntary target setting for the representation of women on supervisory

[13] In 2022, 70% of these companies already reached the target of at least one director of minority ethnic background, while among the 100 largest FTSE-listed companies 96 already do so (Tyler, 2023[198]).

[14] Some states, for example California and Washington State, have their own board diversity requirements.

boards, corporate boards and two senior executive levels below the corporate board. These targets were introduced in 2015, but since 2021 companies that set a zero-target goal for female representation on their corporate boards will have to justify this decision or else risk sanctions (Denis, 2022[70]).

With the adoption of EU Directive on Improving the Gender Balance Among Directors of Listed Companies (*Directive 2022/2381/EU*) in 2022, companies with 250 or more employees in **EU countries** will have to have at least 40% of the underrepresented sex among non-executive directors or 33% among all directors on corporate boards by July 2026. Moreover, major publicly traded companies are also expected to set specific goals to achieve gender balance within their executive boards. Candidates for board posts should be selected based on a defined set of unbiased criteria that allows for an objective comparison of their qualifications. This guarantees that each applicant will be assessed only on the basis of their own unique strengths, regardless of their gender. Companies failing to comply will be faced with "effective, dissuasive and proportionate" penalties, to be determined by the individual member states when they transpose the directives prescriptions into national law by the end of 2024. This can include annulments of director appointments and/or fines (European Commission, 2022[72]; OECD, 2023[1]).

Public sector, politics, and governance

In addition to quotas and targets for private sector companies, G7 countries are also using various tools to increase gender balance in politics, governance, and the public sector. In terms of better representation of women in politics and parliaments, **Italy** mandates a gender distribution of candidates for elections of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate under the electoral law implemented in 2017, stipulating that none of the two genders shall be represented in a percentage exceeding 60%. Non-compliance can be sanctioned with reduced reimbursement of electoral campaign expenses, proportional to deviation from the 60% threshold but limited to 10% of the total reimbursement (IDEA, 2023[73]). **France** introduced legislation in 2000 to ensure gender parity in elections, requiring equal representation of male and female candidates through the "*Loi sur la Parité*".[15] Similar to Italy, if parties fail to comply with these requirements, they face financial penalties in the form of reductions in public funding proportional to the extent of gender imbalance (IDEA, 2023[74]). These laws may explain that Italy and France have the highest representation of women in parliament, even though neither yet reach gender parity (G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps 2023, Indicator 9).

In 2018, **Japan** introduced the *Act on Promotion of Gender Equality in the Political Field*, striving to move closer to equal representation of male and female candidates in the House of Representatives, the House of Councillors, and local government councils. This law delineates the responsibilities of national and local governments, and the efforts of political organisations such as political parties. However, no penalty exists (G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps 2023, Indicator 9 and Waseda Institute of Comparative Law (2019[75])).

Outside of politics, some countries have made progress in improving the representation of women in public sector and legislative leadership positions as well as on board of publicly owned enterprises. For example, a growing number of **EU countries** have been introducing measures to encourage gender parity in recruitment and promotion procedures for judges (European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice, 2020[76]). In 2021, the Public Service Commission in **Canada** released an audit report with the intent to foster recruitment based on merit. The report also suggested examining policies and practices to guarantee a proportionate representation of both genders across all job categories in the public sector (Public Service Commission of Canada, 2021[77]). In addition, the quota of a minimum of 30% of women on boards outlined above extends to state-owned companies and the same applies since 2021 for the **German** quota on

[15] For elections of the National Assembly in France, the discrepancy in the number of male and female candidates presented by a party or coalition should not exceed 2%. For Senate elections, the gap between male and female candidates cannot exceed one in proportional representation districts, whereas in majoritarian districts, if a primary candidate is male, the alternate must be female, and vice versa.

supervisory boards when the government is the majority stakeholder (Denis, 2022[70]). In **France**, a 2012 law aims for 40% gender representation on executive boards of state-owned enterprises in the public sector by 2018 (Demossier et al., 2019[78]).

2.3. Promoting gender equality in entrepreneurship

Taormina G7 leaders' Communiqué (2017), Paragraph 18

"... Increasing women's involvement in the economy – such as by closing the gender gaps in credit and entrepreneurship, and by enhancing women's access to capital, networks and markets – can have dramatically positive economic impacts.... We therefore remain committed to mainstreaming gender equality into all our policies....""

Charlevoix G7 Summit Communiqué (2018), Paragraph 10

"...Our path forward will promote women's full economic participation through working to reduce the gender wage gap, supporting women business leaders and entrepreneurs, and recognizing the value of unpaid care work...."

The gender gap in entrepreneurship is persistent and costs economies ideas, innovation, and jobs. Several G7 countries have recently estimated this cost. Estimates in Canada in 2017 suggest that closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship by 2026 could add up to CAD 150 billion (USD 113 billion) to the Canadian economy, which is 6% more growth than the status quo forecast for 2017-26 (Government of Canada, 2022[79]). Similar estimates regarding the United Kingdom suggest that GBP 250 billion (USD 325 billion) would have been added to the United Kingdom's economy in 2017 or 12% of GDP if women started and scaled businesses at the same rate as men (Alison Rose, 2019[80]). Another way to approximate the size of the gender gap in entrepreneurship is to estimate the number of "missing" entrepreneurs, which is the number of women entrepreneurs that there would be if they were as active as "core age" men (i.e. 30-49 years old) in early-stage entrepreneurship. OECD (2023, Forthcoming[81]), estimates that there would be an additional 13.6 million women entrepreneurs across G7 countries if they were as active as men in early-stage entrepreneurship.

This section presents different estimates of changes in the gender gap in entrepreneurship since 2018 based on international entrepreneurship surveys and self-employment data. It also presents recent policy actions taken in G7 countries that seek to reduce gender gaps, notably in the areas of strengthening policy frameworks and access to finance. The section therefore partially addresses the commitments made in Charlevoix (2018) paragraph 10 and Taormina (2017) paragraph 18.

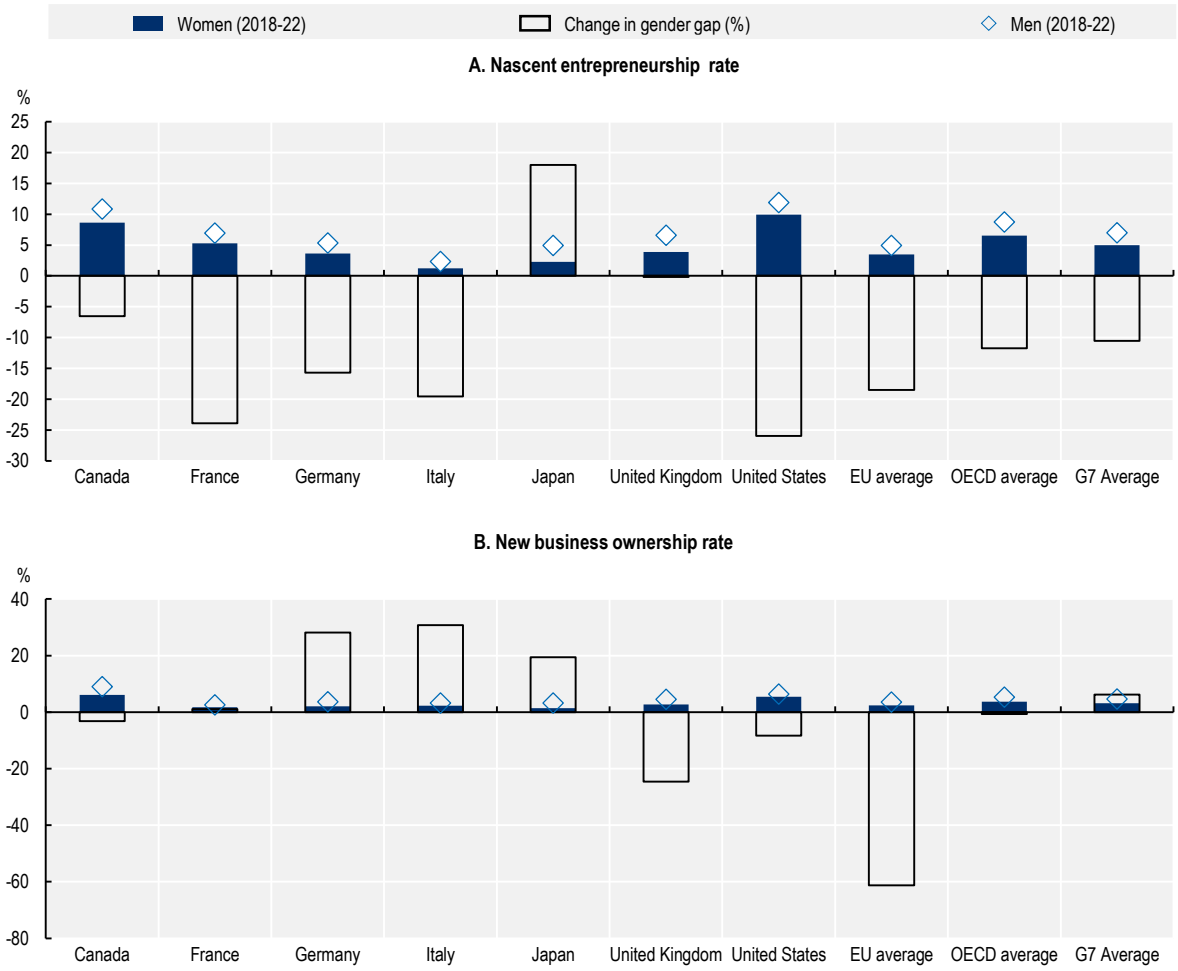
On average, international entrepreneurship surveys show that men are about 1.6 times more likely than women to be involved in starting or managing a new business in G7 economies (Figure 5). Among G7 countries, survey responses indicate that women appear to be the most active in working on a pre-start-up (i.e. nascent entrepreneurship) in the United States (10%) and Canada (9%) between 2018 and 2022, and the least active in Italy (1%) and Japan (2%). Over this period, the gender gap was smallest in the United States where men were only 1.2 times more likely than women to be working on a pre-start-up.

Similarly, international surveys suggest that fewer new start-ups are created by women. Over the 2018-22 period, about 6% of women in the United States and 5% in Canada were owners of a new business (i.e. those less than 42 months old). These rates were the highest among G7 countries (Figure 5). Conversely, fewer than 2% of women in Japan and France were new business owners over this period. These low rates are in part explained by a low proportion of women indicating that they started a business because they had difficulties finding a job. Some of these gender gaps have closed slightly over the past five years. The gender gap in pre-start-up activity rates closed in all G7 countries except for Japan where it increased slightly. The gender gap in new business creation rates closed in three G7 countries (Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States) and was unchanged in France. The increase in the gender gap

in new business creation is broadly consistent with recent research that shows that women entrepreneurs were more heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic than their male counterparts. These differences are largely due to sector effects as those sectors that were impacted the most during the pandemic are also those where women entrepreneurs were disproportionately affected (e.g. personal services, tourism) (OECD/European Commission, 2021[82]) and many of these sectors have not yet fully recovered. However, several recent country-specific studies found that women have been driving business creation in the United States (Tanzi, 2023[83]) and Canada (Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, 2023[84]) over the past two years, driving the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

Figure 5. Progress in closing the gender gap in early-stage entrepreneurship

Percent of population (18-64 years old), 2018-22



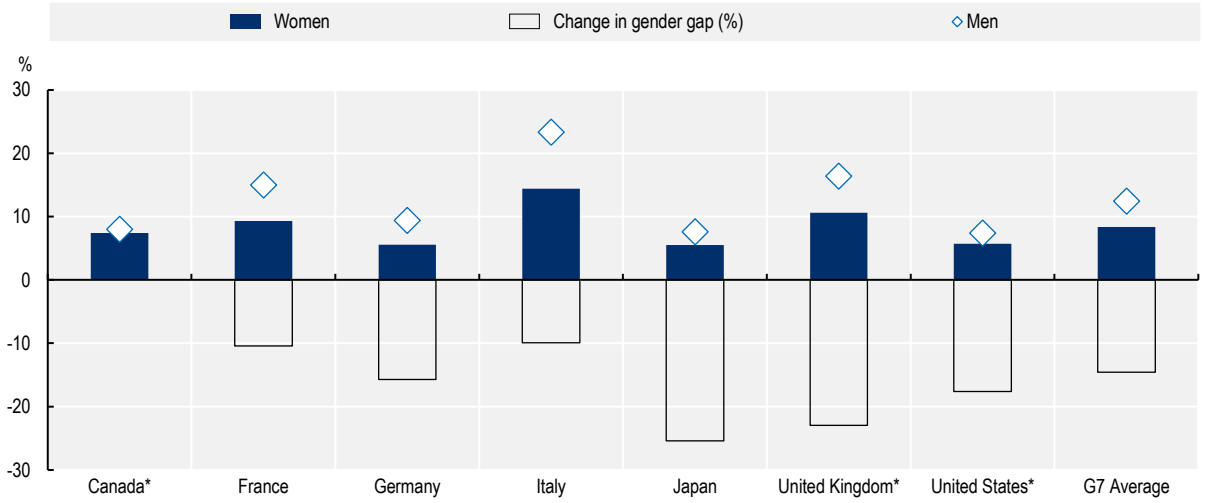
Note: Nascent entrepreneurship is the proportion of the population that is actively involved in setting up a business they will own or co-own; this business has not paid salaries, wages, or any other payments to the owners for more than three months. New business ownership is the proportion of the population that is currently an owner-manager of a new business that has paid salaries, wages or any other payments to the owners for more than three months but not more than 42 months. The actual change in the gender gap refers to the percentage change in the gender gaps between two periods (2016-20 and 2018-22) for people aged 15-64 years old.
Source: GEM (2023[85]), Special tabulations for the OECD of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) adult population survey for the years 2018 to 2022.

Overall, self-employment rates have declined over the past decade. This decline accelerated slightly during the COVID-19 pandemic and self-employment levels have not yet recovered to pre COVID-19 levels. The gender gap in self-employment closed in all G7 countries between 2018 and 2022 except for Canada, where it remained unchanged. This is largely due to a decline in the rates of self-employment among men over the same period except for France and the United States. Self-employment among women increased by 21% in France (relative to 7% among men) and nearly 10% in the United States (compared to 2% among men), leading to the gender gaps in self-employment decreasing by 10% and 18% respectively.

Another way to approximate entrepreneurship is to use self-employment data from labour force surveys. Among G7 countries, men were about 1.5 times more likely than women to be self-employed. In 2022, the self-employment rates for both men and women were highest in Italy in 2022 – women: 14%; men: 23% (Figure 6). However, it also had the largest gender gap in self-employment, where men were 1.6 times more likely to be self-employed. Conversely, the self-employment rate for women was about 6% in Germany, Japan and the United States. The smallest gender gap was in Canada, where men were only 1.1 times more likely to be self-employed than women in 2022.

Figure 6. The gender gap in self-employment has narrowed in all G7 countries since 2018

Percent of working population, 2022



Note: Self-employment data for Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States are from 2021. The change in the self-employment gender gap refers to the percentage change in the gender gaps between 2018 and 2022 for the working population.
Source: Eurostat (2023[86]), Employment and Unemployment (LFS) Database, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/database; Statistics Canada (2023[87]), Table 14-10-0027-01 Employment by class of worker, annual (x 1 000), www150.statcan.gc.cat1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410002701; Statistics of Japan (2023[88]), Labour Force Survey.

2.3.1. Reporting on women's entrepreneurship

Governments need more and better gender-disaggregated data to better tailor their entrepreneurship policies and programmes to the needs of women entrepreneurs. More gender-disaggregated data will help policy makers understand the nature and scale of different barriers and identify priority areas for government intervention. This requires greater efforts to collect gender disaggregated data, improving data linkages between government agencies, and strengthening policy evaluation frameworks and practices.

The G7 is collectively working to strengthen the collection of gender-disaggregated finance data through the G20. Beginning in 2013, the G20 recognised the importance of data collection and analysis as a priority action in addressing the SME finance gender gap and has since developed a set of gender-disaggregated

financial indicators as part of the G20 Global Partnership on Financial Inclusion (World Bank, 2020[89]). Moreover, the need for more gender-disaggregated data collection was reinforced in the 2022 Updated G20/OECD High-Level Principles on SME Financing (OECD, 2022[90]).

Several country-level initiatives have also been implemented towards this objective. The Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH) in **Canada** has improved the collection, analysis and dissemination of data related to women's entrepreneurship and business ownership through its network of 300 partners and 10 regional hubs since its creation in 2018. The government renewed its commitment to improve data accessibility by investing an additional CAD 5 million (USD 4 million) in WEKH in 2021 (Government of Canada, 2022[79]). In the **United Kingdom**, the government launched the Investing in Women Code, which aims to improve women entrepreneurs access to tools, resources and finance from the financial services sector (HM Treasury, 2021[91]). The Code calls on financial institutions, such as banks, venture capital firms and angel investors, to commit to nominate a senior leadership team member be responsible for supporting equality in all its interactions with entrepreneurs, provide the a commonly agreed upon data set concerning all female-led businesses, mixed-gender businesses and all male-led businesses, and to adopt internal practices that aim to improve the potential of women in entrepreneurship. The first round of data collection was carried out from January to September 2020 and will serve as a benchmark for future collections and analysis of gender-disaggregated data. Across traditional bank financing, venture capital and angel investment groups, data found that women were substantially under-represented among applicants and among entrepreneurs who received funding.

2.3.2. Tailored measures to support potential women entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs experience more and greater barriers to entrepreneurship than men. These barriers are often inter-related and reinforce each other. A large body of research shows that the most common barriers faced by women in entrepreneurship are greater difficulties accessing start-up financing and smaller, and less effective professional networks that are less effective at identifying the resources need to operate a successful business. Other barriers include negative social and cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship, and institutional barriers (e.g. family and tax policies), but they can also be hindered by inadequate policy frameworks for entrepreneurship. Among G7 countries, policy actions to address the gender gap in entrepreneurship have been concentrated in the areas of bolstering policy frameworks and reducing gender gaps in access to finance.

Promoting entrepreneurship through policy frameworks

Policy frameworks for women's entrepreneurship can help to bring coherence and consistency to women's entrepreneurship policies and programmes by indicating clear objectives, priorities, targets, activities, responsibilities, and budgets. In practice, policy frameworks are often articulated as strategies. These also help raise awareness of women's entrepreneurship issues and signal a commitment by the government to pursue the outlined objectives. These strategies and frameworks can help to ensure that resources are secured in the short and medium term, which is often a struggle in countries without clear policy frameworks.

Several G7 countries have introduced more inclusive infrastructure and national strategies to support women entrepreneurs, including Canada, France, the United Kingdom and the United States (OECD, 2021[92]). In **Canada**, the Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES) was launched in 2018 and serves as a framework for women's entrepreneurship policy. It aims to increase women-owned businesses' access to finance, talent, networks, and professional expertise they need to start up, scale up and access new markets. It also invests in research and data development (Government of Canada, 2021[93]). **France** renewed a framework agreement with the BPIfrance agency in support of women's entrepreneurship for the period 2021-23, which aims to develop better entrepreneurship support, improve access to finance for women entrepreneurs and combat gender stereotypes in the entrepreneurial ecosystem (bpifrance,

2021[94]). In 2023, **Germany** introduced the action plan "More female entrepreneurs for small and medium-sized enterprises." The strategy includes more than 40 measures that aim to support women in entrepreneurship and self-employment, including through increased financial resources, an improved regulatory environment and more visibility and recognition for the contributions and accomplishments of women entrepreneurs (BMWK, 2023[95]). The **United Kingdom** has had dedicated innovation policy for women managed by Innovate UK (innovation agency), which aims to encourage and support the participation of more women entrepreneurs in innovation support schemes. Since its launch in 2016, the number of women applying for Innovate UK support has increased by 70% (UK Research and Innovation, 2023[96]). The **United States** have introduced a National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality (The White House, 2023[97]). as well as the U.S. Strategy on Global Women's Economic Security (U.S. Department of State, 2022[98]), which both include support for women entrepreneurs.

Supporting access to capital

The lack of equitable access to capital for women entrepreneurs remains an issue across the G7 countries. These gender gaps in access to finance are often due to institutional and market failures on both the supply-side and demand-side of financial markets (e.g. bias in financial markets, ineffective policies and programmes, information asymmetries), as well as to specific characteristics of women-owned firms -size, sector, age of the firm (OECD, 2023[1]). For example, in the **United States**, 25% of women-owned business had their loan applications denied compared to only 19% of men-owned businesses in 2022 (Bareham, 2023[99]; Corcoran et al., 2023[100]). Moreover, there is a significant financial gender gap among growth-oriented firms. Globally, women-founded businesses that seek venture capital investments receive about 2% of total investment and the funding amounts received are smaller, on average, than the investments made to men-founded businesses (OECD, 2023[1]). Gender biases in lending practices and investor preferences are due in part to the small number of women investors and lenders. For example, 19% of partners at venture capital firms in **Canada** are women (Canadian Venture Capital Private Equity Association, 2021[101]).

G7 countries have increased their efforts to address the gender gap in entrepreneurship finance, notably among innovative and high-growth firms in recent years. As noted earlier, the WES in **Canada** aims to expand access to finance for women entrepreneurs directly through the CAD 55 million Women Entrepreneurship Loan Fund (USD 40 million), which provides loans of up to CAD 50 000 (USD 36 500) to women business owners and entrepreneurs (Government of Canada, 2021[93]). WES also invests in the entrepreneurship ecosystem to strengthen overall capacity and address ecosystem gaps for women entrepreneurs through the CAD 165 million (USD 120 million) WES Ecosystem Fund, which provides financial support for not-for-profit organisations supporting women entrepreneurs, and the Inclusive Women Venture Capital Initiative CAD 15 million (USD 11 million), which seeks to increase venture capital funding to women entrepreneurs, reduce gender biases and build a more inclusive risk and venture capital environment in Canada.

With the 2021 Budget Law, the "Women's Enterprise Fund" was established in **Italy** to provide subsidised financing and non-repayable grants to women-owned businesses, with a specific focus on high-tech sectors. Additionally, it includes programmes and initiatives to promote an entrepreneurial culture among the female population and training guidance programmes for fields and professions with low female representation. Initially the fund had resources of EUR 40 million, which later increased by EUR 400 million from the resources of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Italian Government, 2022[102]; JERI-WEC, 2023[103]). Since 2013, the central guarantee fund for SMEs has had special provisions to facilitate access to financing for women's businesses. By the end of 2023, the Department for Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Business and Made in Italy will sign an agreement to update the conditions of access to the guarantee fund.

Strengthening access to microfinance

Microfinance is an important financial tool for supporting women entrepreneurs because it is designed to address the obstacles faced in the traditional banking sector and credit market. Women are the most significant target client group for microfinance institutions (MFIs), accounting for nearly 60% of microfinance borrowers in the European Union (OECD/European Commission, 2021[82]). The vast majority of MFIs offer integrated support schemes, which bundle microloans with non-financial services (e.g. mentoring, coaching and training schemes). By packaging financial support with complementary support services, MFIs help increase the chance of business sustainability and the repayment of the loan by their clients. Evaluations show that these non-financial services are effective and are typically impactful for women entrepreneurs considering their relatively greater skills gaps and limited professional networks (OECD/European Commission, 2021[82]; Halabisky, 2018[104]).

G7 countries have already implemented initiatives to support and bolster the microfinance sector, including increasing available supply of microcredit and modernising business practices. For example, Adie, the largest microfinance institution **in France**, which receives public support, introduced an electronic signature or "e-signature" in 2020, which has reduced loan processing times and accelerated the disbursement of funds to entrepreneurs (OECD/European Commission, 2021[82]). In **Italy**, the government introduced several policy actions aimed at reducing the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on entrepreneurs benefitting from microfinance, including a moratorium on loan repayments, loan guarantees of up to 80% of the loan amount and an increase in the maximum loan amount of business microcredits from EUR 25 000 to EUR 40 000 (about USD 29 560 to USD 47 300) (OECD/European Commission, 2021[82]).

2.4. Policies to support more women in work using digital, scientific, and technological skills

Taormina G7 Roadmap for a gender-responsive economic environment (2017), paragraph 2g

"...Promote participation by girls and women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM). Acknowledging that the area of digital, scientific, and technological skills is still one in which women and girls are under-represented, that such skills are an important requirement for many decent, high-paying jobs in today's economy,... we remain committed to: Supporting universities and research institutes, as appropriate, in the integration of the gender dimension in university courses and curricula, as well as in research and innovation contents. Strengthen the collaboration between universities, research institutes and the private sector...."

Across the G7 countries and beyond, gender continues to play an important role in one's choice of career. Women continue to be underrepresented in STEM related fields and overrepresented in fields related to education, health, and welfare. It is important to continue to support women into STEM, since apart from being high paying jobs on average, they are often also jobs where the gender pay gap is relatively small (Bertrand, 2020[105]; Samaniego et al., 2023[106]). The gender pay gap factor is crucial as women with a tertiary education earn only about 76% as much as their male peers (Encinas-Martín and Cherian, 2023[107]).

One of the key commitments in the "G7 Roadmap for a Gender-Responsive Economic Environment", adopted at the 2017 G7 Taormina Leaders' Communiqué was to "Promote participation by girls and women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM)". In 2020, the G7 average share of women among all tertiary graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) was 31% and only slightly less than the OECD average of 32.1%. Among the G7, Japan and Germany had a lesser share of women, compared to men, among STEM graduates than both the G7 and

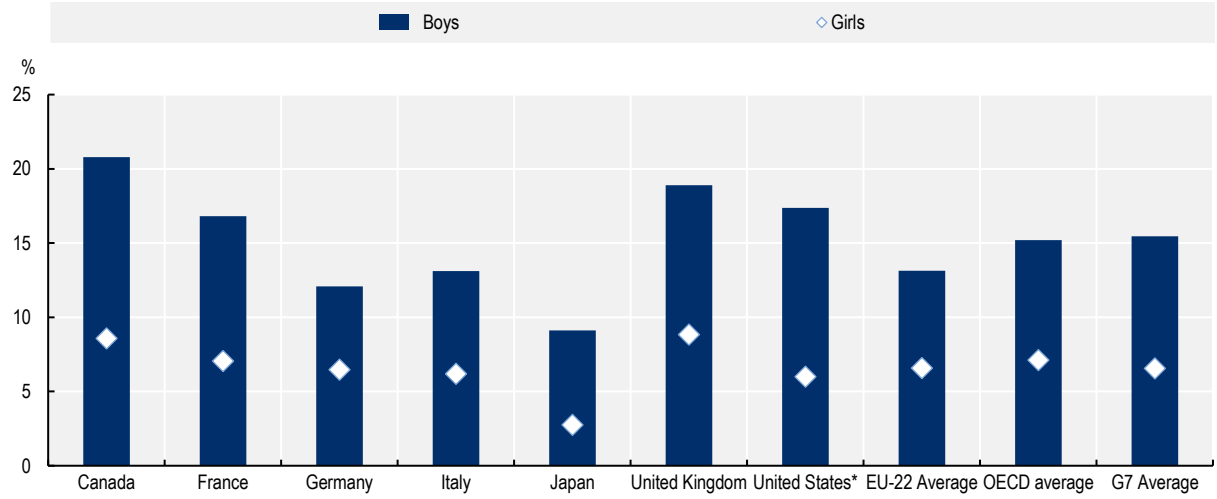
OECD average. At 17.2%, Japan had the least share of women graduates in STEM, while Italy had the highest share at 38.9% (G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps 2023, Indicator 2b).

Gender plays an important role not just in adults' choices of career but also in career aspirations of young boys and girls. An analysis of the PISA 2018 data reflects a uniform and clear pattern of an interlink between gender and career choice. It shows that more boys than girls expect to work as a science and engineering professional or an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) professional when they are 30, across all participating countries. OECD (2015[108]) showed that gender disparities in performance do not stem from innate differences in aptitude, but rather from students' attitudes towards learning and their behaviour in school, from how they choose to spend their leisure time, and from the confidence they have – or do not have – in their own abilities as students. Engaging girls and young women in STEM encounter barriers such as gender norms, limited role models, educational gaps, and unconscious bias. To overcome these challenges, initiatives should provide equal opportunities in STEM education, promote diverse role models, and create inclusive environments and inclusive narratives, encouraging more female participation in STEM.

A closer look at the G7 countries shows that Italy, France and Japan have a smaller share of women expecting to work either as a science and engineering or as an ICT professional than the OECD average. On the other hand, Canada has a higher share of women than the OECD average, expecting to work in either category (Figure 7 and Figure 8). Japan has the smallest share of girls expecting to work as a science and technology professional at 30 and this is a direct reflection of the actual share of women presently enrolled in STEM fields at university. Among the G7, Japan has the smallest share of women enrolled in STEM. Closing this gender gap in Japan could potentially boost its total factor productivity by 20% (Xu, 2023[109]).

Figure 7. Girls do not expect to work in STEM careers as much as boys do

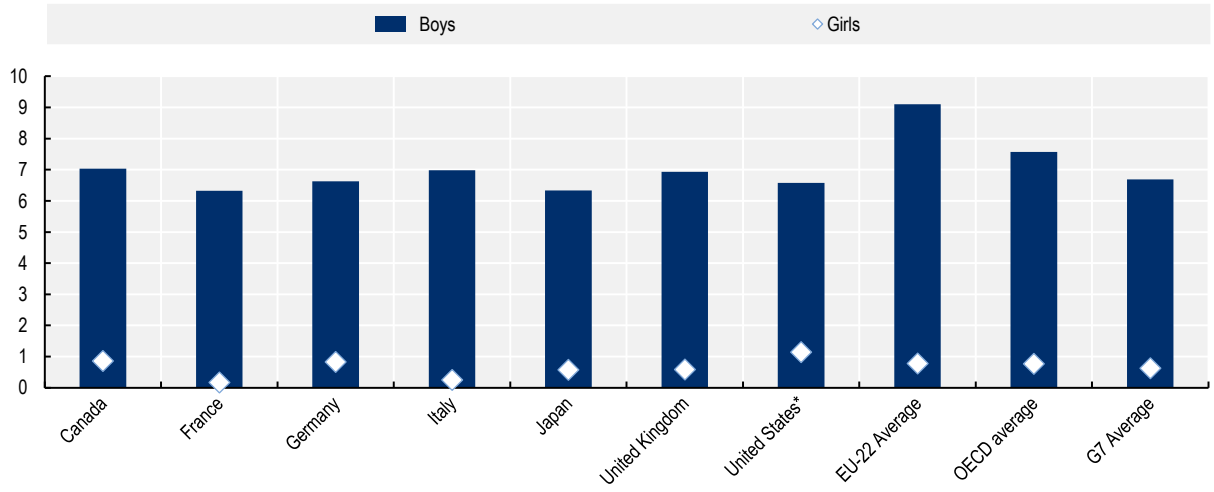
Share of boys and girls expecting to work as a science or technology professional by age 30



Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database.

Figure 8. Fewer girls expect to work in ICT occupations than in STEM more generally

Share of boys and girls expecting to work as an ICT professional by age 30



Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database.

Across the G7, the share of women expecting to work as an ICT professional is extremely low, in sharp contrast to men. Across all participating countries in OECD PISA, no country recorded a greater than 3% share of girls who expect to work as an ICT professional at age 30 (OECD, 2019[110]). The difference between boys and girls expecting to work as an ICT professional has also been widening over the years. Between PISA 2015 and 2018, the share of boys who expect to work as an ICT professional at age 30 increased by 1.1 percentage points while the corresponding increase in the share of girls was only 0.2%. The United Kingdom recorded the highest share of girls expecting to work as a science or technology professional. However, the share of girls in the United Kingdom expecting to work in the ICT sector is below OECD average. By contrast, the United States have the highest reported share of girls expecting to work in the ICT sector, but the share of girls expecting to work as science or technology professional at age 30 is below the OECD average.

The career aspirations of girls and boys are often a reflection of the opportunities and support available to them in their countries. Boys and girls are often weighed down by the stereotypes that persist in schools, communities and even families. Among all OECD PISA countries where a "parents' questionnaire" was distributed in 2012, parents were more likely to expect their sons, rather than their daughters, to work in a field related to science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM). The differences in boys' and girls' career aspirations are most often not based on innate differences in aptitudes but are rather a function of what students consider to be their academic strengths. According to OECD PISA 2018, boys were more likely to be low achievers in reading, science, and mathematics than girls. However, among high achievers, boys performed better, but only slightly, than girls in science and mathematics. Although girls' disadvantage in mathematics has been diminishing, only 14% of 15-year-old girls who were top performers in science or mathematics reported that they expect to work as professionals in science or engineering, while 26% of top-performing boys the same age reported they would expect to do so. The reasons for these differences can be many, but girls generally have less confidence in their abilities to solve mathematics or science problems than boys. Even high achieving girls report more feelings of anxiety towards mathematics than boys and they often have a bigger fear of failure than boys.

The greater representation of girls in STEM thereby requires policies that make teachers, parents, and employers more aware of their unconscious and conscious biases, stereotypes and institutional and

societal barriers and obstacles that restrict women from achieving their full potential. It is pertinent to have targeted policies to introduce careers and opportunities in STEM to young girls and to actively encourage them to aspire to be STEM professionals by overcoming stereotypes and the obstacles that they find along their school and professional paths. Apart from encouraging women into STEM, it is equally important to remove barriers that restrict their growth in STEM careers and to focus on policies that helps retain women in STEM.

2.4.1. Collaboration between Universities, business, and policy makers to address Gender inequality in STEM education

The 2017, G7 Taormina Leaders' Communiqué, made clear commitments while adopting the "G7 Roadmap for a Gender-Responsive Economic Environment" to actively encourage girls and women in STEM. Since then, the G7 countries have been successful in implementing as well as supporting initiatives through diverse methods of intervention to encourage female representation in STEM education and careers.

One of the largest initiatives in **Italy** has been the "Girls Code it better", aimed at bringing more girls into STEM and ICT careers through tech clubs established at secondary schools. It delivers a 45-hour course during extracurricular afternoon classes to girls, who are trained by a teacher with ICT knowledge as well as a technically skilled coach. The girls can pick a topic of their choice from a list of tech areas including 3D design, web design and others and they are supported in bringing to life a project in that area. From its initiation in 2014, it successfully expanded to 522 clubs across 223 secondary schools in 2022 with over 10 000 girls participating from 17 regions of Italy (EU Digital Skills and Jobs Platform, 2023[111]). Since 2017 several projects have been implemented to enhance STEM competencies for girls. For example, the "We learned STEM in summer" or STEM project 2020 (Italian Government, 2021[112]). In addition, the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) allocated EUR 1.1 billion to improve training for students, teachers, and school staff in STEM (Italian Government, 2023[113]). Through PNRR EUR 600 million have been made available to strengthen disciplines in all school cycles with STEM subjects. The intervention aims to guarantee equal opportunities for study and work orientation towards STEM disciplines.

The L'Oréal Foundation in **France** launched the 'For Girls in Science' programme in 2014 to encourage women onto a STEM career path. It involved an in-class intervention of an hour by young scientists who were awarded the L'Oréal-UNESCO Fellowship 'For Women in Science' and by young scientists in the Research and Innovation division of the L'Oréal group. They shared their experience and career paths with students and provided information on science related careers as well as gender stereotypes. A recent evaluation of the programme showed that the intervention helped in reducing the stereotypes associated with scientific jobs as well as gender differences in abilities. Moreover, it was successful in increasing the chances of high achieving girls in grade 12 enrolling in male dominated STEM college programmes (Breda et al., 2023[114]).

Over the years, the **United States'**s premier science facility**,** NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) has played a pivotal role in the country's efforts to increase women in STEM through multiple initiatives like "Next Gen STEM" and the "Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP)". The "Next Gen STEM" is an example of a project that focuses on inculcating interest in STEM among school students by introducing and connecting them to the work done at NASA. One such effort included working with the SciGirls video series, a public access television series, to create NASA themed content to engage girls in STEM. Through MUREP, NASA created a Women's Colleges and Universities opportunity to help women overcome obstacles in working in the STEM fields. This year, MUREP awarded USD 5 million in funding to seven women's colleges and universities to research and develop strategies to increase the retention of women in STEM degrees and careers.

Similar to Italy's "Girls Code it better", **Canada** has the "Hackergal", a not-for-profit organisation that works with middle school and high school girls (as well as non-binary students) to inspire them into coding. They connect with students through multiple forums like classrooms, community centres, summer schools, and hackathons. Hackergal also works with educators, school boards and school districts to teach them and to provide information on the full curriculum in coding that they offer with the aim of creating a safe space for girls to learn, make mistakes and build confidence in coding.

Understanding its challenges regarding women in STEM, **Japan** has been actively trying to tackle them. To encourage women into STEM, Japan has been carrying out the "Riko-challe" initiative. Working in tandem with companies, universities and academic bodies, the campaign has been successful in amassing a support network of 865 establishments as of March 2023. Together they have been consistently holding summer events each year for junior high and high school female students that include visits to STEM workplaces and opportunities for hands-on experience. In June 2018, Japan also started a STEM Girls Ambassadors initiative, where the ambassadors serve as role models to inspire more girls to choose STEM careers. In 2023 around a dozen universities in Japan introduced quotas for female students in STEM following proposals by the government council in 2022 to provide grants to encourage initiatives targeting more women in STEM.

Between 2009 and 2020, the **United Kingdom** was successful in increasing girls taking up STEM A-levels by 30% in England. Between 2011 and 2020, there was a 50.1% increase in the number of women accepted to full time STEM undergraduate courses. The "Gender Balance in Computing" research project, backed by GBP 2.4m funding from the Department of Education, focused on understanding what works in encouraging young girls to develop an interest in computing in early school years and take up computer science in their GCSE and A level. In September 2023, the programme evolved to the "I Belong" project that offers a curated package of training, resources and implementation support for teachers and school leaders to raise understanding of the barriers to girls' participation in computer science. Apart from encouraging women to take up degrees and jobs in STEM, the United Kingdom has been focusing also on retaining women in STEM. The government has backed initiatives like the "STEM ReCharge" programme that focuses on women who have taken lengthy breaks in their career to care for others by providing them with the skills to succeed in the workplace.

Germany has built a successful partnership between the government and private enterprises to encourage girls and women into STEM through multiple interventions. Every year technical enterprises, enterprises with technical departments and technical training facilities, universities, and research centres are invited to organise an open day for girls – "Girls' Day – Future Prospects for Girls" – to be introduced to jobs and professions with less than 40% of women. The vocational choices of girls are influenced in a very positive way. The "Klischeefrei" initiative is an alliance of representatives from the fields of education and training, politics, business, and research. It aims to ensure that career and study choices are free of gender stereotypes. By 2023, more than 560 partner organisations will have joined the initiative. The successful work in the National Pact for Women in STEM Professions initiated by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is now being continued in the MINT[16] Action Plan under the name "Alliance for Women in STEM Professions" by the STEM networking agency "MINTvernetzt". With its latest initiative #empowerGirl, it aims to provide at least 1 000 internships for girls by 2024 together with its partner network. The intention is to create equal opportunities for girls in companies and businesses, as too few internships have been made available so far and these are often only found through personal contacts.

[16] MINT is German acronym for mathematics, informatics, natural science and technology, and comparable to the STEM concept.

3 Addressing gender inequalities globally

Elmau G7 Leaders' Communiqué (2022), Page 24

"... As we strive to tackle the global challenges of our time, we recognise that they are far from gender-neutral and are determined to address their gendered impacts. We commit to make every effort to collectively increase the share of G7's bilateral allocable ODA advancing gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment over the coming years...""

More generally, the analysis in this section covers gender equality commitments made in the G7 leaders' communiques over the past six years, including those from Taormina (2017), Charlevoix (2018), Biarritz (2019), Carbis Bay (2021), and Elmau (2022).

Gender equality, and the empowerment and full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls were set out as a global objective in their own right in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires collective action in addressing unequal power dynamics and systemic barriers to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity. Global challenges disproportionately impact women and girls in all their diversity, be it climate shocks, conflicts or the COVID-19 pandemic. The extensive socio-economic impacts caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic widened pre-existing gender gaps and reinforced gender inequalities within and between countries (Mckinsey & Company, 2020[115]) (UN Women, 2020[116]). They disproportionately affected women and girls in developing countries, reversing years of progress towards gender equality. As development partners and members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), G7 countries have an important leadership role to play in supporting gender equality and women and girls in all their diversity globally.

In the 2022 G7 Development Ministers' Meeting Communiqué (G7 Elmau Summit, 2022[117]), G7 countries set out their intention to enhance the gender equality impact of aid activities by increasingly implementing gender transformative approaches. They also recognised *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: DAC Guidance for Development Partners* (OECD, 2022[118]). The Guidance acknowledges that gender equality needs to be included in all stages of development and humanitarian interventions – from the policies to the design phase, throughout implementation and financing, and in monitoring and evaluation.

G7 countries also committed to making every effort to not only improve the quality of policies and practice in this field with the new guidance, but also to collectively increase the share of the G7's bilateral allocable ODA advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity over the coming years, and track performance using the OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker. This is monitored in the G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps which includes an indicator and data on the "Share of aid activities targeting gender equality as Significant (GE1) and Principal (GE2)".

3.1. Policy frameworks for foreign policy and development co-operation

Political support amongst G7 countries for helping to enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls globally is overall strong. Countries are mainstreaming a gender equality perspective throughout their development co-operation policies and strategies.

Canada, France and most recently **Germany** have opted for feminist foreign policies or feminist international development policies. **Canada** has, since 2016, pursued a feminist foreign policy across all areas of international engagement, including diplomacy, peace and security efforts, trade and economic relations, international assistance, and consular services. It is notably being implemented through a suite of complementary international policies, programmes, and initiatives. These include Canada's: Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP); Trade Diversification Strategy, with its Inclusive Approach to Trade; and National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). Under its a *Feminist International Assistance Policy* (Global Affairs Canada, 2021[119]) Canada commits to a feminist approach in supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the most effective way to build a more peaceful, more inclusive, and more prosperous world. In the 2018 OECD DAC peer review, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls was recognised as being at the heart of Canada's global engagement, referring specifically to their FIAP as a key measure for global poverty reduction (OECD, 2018[120]). The review also noted the need to pursue greater guidance for staff and partners to ensure consistency in the implementation of the policy.

France's Feminist Diplomacy was adopted in 2019, making gender equality a key priority for France both at the domestic level and at the international level. France's Feminist Diplomacy guides the cross-cutting integration of gender equality within all its actions, aiming to address multiple issues, including inequality reduction and sustainable development, peace and security, defense and promotion of fundamental rights, and climate and economic issues. In addition, France's development policy from 2018 sets out five thematic priorities of which gender equality is one (Interministerial International Cooperation and Development Committee, 2018[121]). To support the renewal of the International Strategy for Gender Equality (2018-22), the High Council for Gender Equality, an external independent institution, produced a report to take stock on the implementation and proposed recommendations with a view to continuing and broadening the framework of France's Feminist Diplomacy, (Haut Conseil à l'Egalité entre les Femmes et les Hommes, 2023[122]). In the 2018 OECD DAC peer review, it was recommended that France increases the financial resources earmarked for gender equality to implement their 2018 *Gender and Development Strategy* (OECD, 2018[123]).

Germany launched both a Feminist Foreign Policy and a Feminist Development Policy in 2023. The Foreign policy sets out the ambition to address gender inequalities and the rights of women and marginalised people in peace and security, humanitarian efforts, climate, economic processes, and to promote equitable representation and participation – as well as diversity in the foreign service. In turn, Germany's Feminist Foreign and Development Policy identifies the four action areas of strengthening rights, resources, and representation, anchoring a feminist approach across the portfolio and targeted promotion of gender equality, building international alliances, and leading by example. To support implementation of its Feminist Development Policy, Germany organised a launch workshop of the OECD DAC *Guidance* and will publish a new Gender Action Plan as the implementation plan for the Strategy on Feminist Development Policy. In the 2021 DAC peer review, it was recommended that Germany invest more in gender equality and women's empowerment to enhance their development co-operation (OECD, 2021[124]).

The **United Kingdom**, the **United States** and **Italy** have all included gender equality as a legal requirement in international development (Box 5). The **United States** launched its first National strategy on gender equity and equality in 2021, which sets out "the goal of reaching gender equality at home and abroad" (The White House, 2021[125]) and a Strategy on Global Women's Economic Security in 2023 (U.S. Department of State, 2022[98]). In the 2022 DAC peer review, the United States was recommended to develop a whole-of-government development co-operation policy to enable them to strengthen the

promotion of gender equity and equality abroad (OECD, 2022[126]). In 2023,the United States launched its *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy* (USAID, 2023[127]) with the key strategic objectives to reduce gender disparities; strive to eliminate gender-based violence and mitigate its harmful effects; increase women's and girls' agency; and advance structural changes that address the root causes of gender inequality and promote equitable gender norms. The **United Kingdom** released *The UK Government's Strategy for International Development* in May 2022, in which a key objective is to *Provide women and girls with the freedom they need to succeed* (FCDO, 2022[128]). The UK's *International women and girls strategy 2023 to 2030* sets out its commitment to "the 3 Es", namely, Educating girls, Empowering women and girls and championing their health and rights, and Ending violence (FCDO, 2023[129]). In the 2020 DAC peer review, the United Kingdom was recognised as a leader in the field of gender equality, highlighting their position as a global champion of sexual reproductive health and rights (OECD, 2020[130]). The United Kingdom has published a White Paper on International Development which establishes key areas for action to deliver a step-change in international development; this includes putting women and girls centre stage and challenging the rollback of women and girls' rights (FCDO, 2023[131]).

Box 5. Gender equality as a legal requirement in international development

The **United Kingdom**'s International Development Act 2002 provides the principal statutory power for its overseas development and humanitarian spending. It was amended by the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014 to include the legal duty to consider the desirability of providing development assistance in ways that reduce gender inequality, with a similar duty when providing humanitarian assistance. The duty embeds the aim of achieving gender equality in the legal framework for the UK's development and humanitarian interventions. This legal framework supports and complements the delivery of substantial policy commitments set out in the FCDO's International Women and Girls Strategy (FCDO, 2023[129]), and actions taken to ensure effective and accountable delivery of the Strategy, which includes bringing together high level personnel to advance gender equality across the organisation, and developing an internal delivery plan to track progress against commitments. The United Kingdom has committed to ensure at least 80% of FCDO's bilateral aid programmes have a focus on gender equality by 2030 (using OECD DAC markers Significant and Principal).

United States: The Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment (WEEE) Act of 2018 (S. 3247) was signed into law on 9 January 2019. The WEEE Act seeks to better target development assistance for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to women. The Act also includes a section that addresses the gender policy of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), specifically outlining a series of objectives for the policy (e.g. reducing gender disparities in crucial sectors, striving to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV) and reduce its harmful effects, increasing the capability of women and girls to achieve their rights, etc.). The Law also requires the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment throughout USAID's programme cycle in every sector and requires that all strategies, projects, and activities be shaped by a gender analysis. The WEEE Act's definition of "gender analysis" is consistent with USAID's Automated Directives System Chapter 205, "Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle." To comply with the gender analysis requirement, provide the agency with a repository of gender analyses, to enable reporting to the United States Congress, and to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices on gender integration, USAID has developed an internal online database to aggregate and compile the gender analyses carried out and used by all missions across the agency.

Italy's "General law on international development co-operation" (Law 125/2014), explicitly includes gender equality among the fundamental objectives of development co-operation (Article 1). The "Three-year co-operation programming and policy orientation plan 2019/21", envisaged by Article 12 also confirms gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls among priorities for Italy's development co-operation system.

Source: OECD (2022[118]), *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: Guidance for Development Partners*, https://doi.org/10.1787/0bddfa8f-en, and a communication from the United Kingdom.

Italy's international development co-operation priorities stem from the legal decree (Box 5) and include eradication of poverty, reduction of inequality, promotion of human rights and gender equality, support for liberal democracy and the establishment of the rule of law. Italy's development agency AICS also has *Guidelines On Gender Equality And The Empowerment Of Women And Girls* (2020-24). In the 2019 DAC peer review, Italy's focus on gender and disability was highlighted as a key strength of their presence in fragile countries (OECD, 2019[132]).

In 2016, **Japan** formulated the Development Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment as one of the thematic policies under the Development Co-operation Charter (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2016[133]), and it has been strengthening its contribution towards gender equality and women's empowerment in accordance with this policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2020[134]). By revising its Development Co-operation Charter in 2023, Japan signalled its continued support for gender mainstreaming (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, 2023[135]). The 2020 DAC peer review of Japan noted that Japan promotes gender equality globally and has taken steps to mainstream gender and women's empowerment, as well as environment and climate change. It also notes that there is an opportunity to pay greater attention to gender and vulnerability in economic infrastructure projects, to go beyond doing no harm (OECD, 2020[136]).

In addition, the G7 EU members are also implementing the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III, which sets out the EU gender equality policy framework externally. (European Commission, 2020[137]).

3.1.1. Transformative approaches

G7 members are increasingly employing approaches to transform unequal gender power relations, systemic barriers, and the harmful structures that uphold them, as set out in the Development Ministers' Meeting Communiqué and the OECD Guidance.

The EU GAP III[17] (Council of the European Union, 2019[138]) implemented by the **EU G7 countries**, highlights that a gender-transformative approach is required to advance the effectiveness of external engagement on gender equality. To leave no one behind, the GAP III seeks to tackle all intersecting dimensions of discrimination. The reversal of harmful and discriminatory gender norms and power imbalances is highlighted as one of the key elements involved in addressing the root causes of gender inequality. **The United States** uses the design phase of an intervention to identify actions that will alter the pre-existing power dynamics between women and men in that area, then create mechanisms and opportunities to amplify the voices of women throughout it. Across its policies and programmes, **Canada** seeks to challenge unequal power relations and systemic discrimination as well as harmful norms and practices, taking into consideration gender and intersectional dimensions of discrimination and inequality. **Germany's** Feminist Foreign and Development Policy will qualitatively align its portfolio and implement structural feminist approaches that help to overcome power structures, discriminatory social norms and laws. Therefore, Germany is committed to anchoring gender-transformative, human rights based and intersectional approaches. This also means providing resources and removing barriers in the design and implementation of policies and programmes (OECD, 2022[118]).

Local women's rights organisations and movements are critical actors in addressing the structural drivers of gender inequality. Groups and movements that are rooted in their local communities, have contextual expertise, and speak local languages, and act on the basis of lived experience, are best positioned to deliver change that is transformative and lasting. **Canada** was the second largest DAC funder to such organisations in 2020-21. In 2017, it launched the Women's Voice and Leadership programme dedicated

[17] The European Commission has adopted an EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-25 and an EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III "An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action" 2021-25, welcomed through Presidency Conclusions.

to supporting women's rights organisations with flexible funding and capacity-building. Canada was also instrumental in setting up the innovative "Equality Fund" in 2018, with the objective of providing core, multi-year flexible funding to women's organisations and feminist movements. The Equality Fund brings together gender-lens investing, funding from donors' governments, and multi-sector philanthropy model to build a sustainable pipeline of resources for feminist movements at scale. In 2023, the **United Kingdom** became the second donor government to partner with the Equality Fund through a financial contribution. **France** launched its Support Fund for Feminist Organizations in 2019 as a key measure of its Feminist Diplomacy with the goal of supporting local feminist civil society organisations dedicated to promoting gender equality and women's and girls' rights. The Fund supports the activities and the structural costs of feminist movements worldwide. **The United States'** 2023 USAID strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment identifies locally led development as a key priority, and notes that USAID will emphasise direct engagement with, funding of, and support for local organisations, particularly those led by women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals and those dedicated to promoting gender equality. Similarly, **Germany's** Feminist development policy identifies such movements and organisations as important actors (BMZ, 2023[139]). The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is assessing direct participation formats and mechanisms for the funding of local civil society, grassroots organisations and activists (BMZ, 2023[139]).

3.2. Addressing the interlinkages of climate change, environment, and gender inequality through development co-operation

A better understanding of the interlinked challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and gender inequality, and their impacts on sustainable development is required. Often, gender inequalities and barriers increase the negative impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss on women and girls in all their diversity. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to help combat climate change through tackling biodiversity has a specific target to ensure a gender responsive approach is applied to the implementation of the Report. Including by recognising equitable, meaningful, and informed leadership at all levels of decision making related to biodiversity, and equal rights and access to land and natural resources (SCBD, 2022[140]).

OECD research indicates that among G7 countries, this interlinkage is important to the essence, structure, and development co-operation objectives of in particular **Canada** and **Germany**. **Canada's** Feminist International Assistance Policy includes a specific action area, "Environment and climate action" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017[141]). Recognising the disproportionate and negative effects of climate change on women and the importance of their participation in all climate adaptation and mitigation efforts, the action area lays out commitments to gender-responsive climate action in the context of development co-operation. These commitments include to support women's leadership and decision-making in climate change mitigation and adaptation, resilience-building and sustainable natural resource management; ensure that the government's climate-related planning, policy making, and financing acknowledge the particular challenges faced by women and girls; and, support employment and business opportunities for women in the renewable energy sector. Additionally, steps to carry out these commitments are identified. For example, to support the creation of economic opportunities for women in renewable energy, Canada will support programmes that promote the use of renewable energy, increase access to related services and information for women entrepreneurs, and ensure that climate financing is accessible to women-led initiatives and enterprises. **Germany's** Feminist Development Policy recognises that climate change and the loss of biological diversity pose a particular threat to women, girls, and marginalised groups in all their diversity (BMZ, 2023[139]). Moreover, it underlines their importance as knowledge bearers and decision-makers and argues that women, girls, and marginalised groups such as Indigenous Peoples, should play an important role in decision-making processes. In aligning its portfolio with feminist development policy,

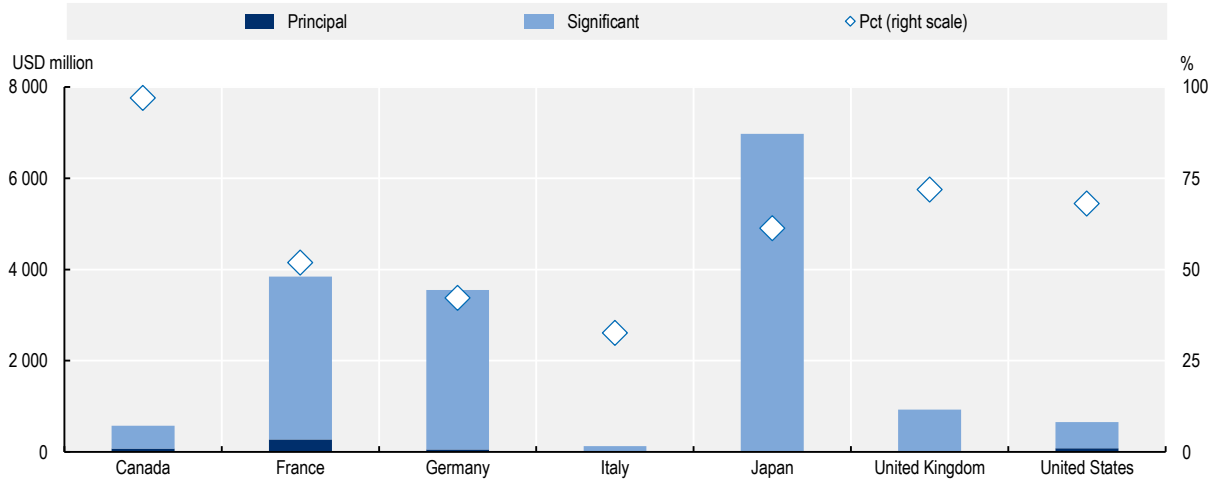
German development cooperation wants to harness the major potentials that exist in sectors such as climate and biodiversity.

In the **United States**, within USAID, various programmes are being implemented that address climate change and gender inequality. These include an initiative to support national governments in developing climate change gender action plans, and increase access to climate finance for women-led organisations (Climatelinks, 2023[142]; IUCN, 2020[143]). The Unites States launched in 2023 its Strategy to Respond to the Effects of Climate Change on Women (U.S. Department of State, 2023[144]). The **United Kingdom's** International Women and Girls Strategy (2023-30) recognises the climate and gender nexus and sets out commitments to integrate gender and social inclusion objectives into climate finance, programmes and strategies and to increase the proportion of International Climate Finance that will be gender marked (FCDO, 2023[131]). The **United Kingdom** also addresses the climate, environment, and biodiversity crisis in and through girl's education (FCDO, 2022[145]). By focusing on a framework of priority actions to deliver climate-smart education systems, the United Kingdom aims to build more resilient and inclusive education systems to mitigate the impact of climate and environmental change on education, and build knowledge, skills and agency for climate adaptation and mitigation to maximise the potential of educated populations for addressing the climate and environment crisis. The **United Kingdom** has committed to addressing the intersection between climate change and disability inclusion, including reaching women and girls with disabilities, through the FCDO's Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy (FCDO, 2022[146]).

Italy considers climate change and the sustainable management of water, forests and other natural resources, and provides details on women's equal access to information, decision-making roles and abilities to take action regarding climate change (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010[147]; OECD, 2023[148]). The EU's GAP III highlights the need to address the gender dimension of climate change and to promote gender perspectives in climate and environmental action and decision making, for instance through support for equal and meaningful participation of women and their representation in climate negotiations and policy making, in sustainable resource management, in sustainable agriculture and food systems, and support to women's participation in the green economy. As members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, G7 countries contribute and report aid to climate with gender equality objectives. While **Japan** provides the largest total amount, **Canada** has the highest share of climate aid with gender equality objectives (Figure 9). DAC members also report aid to biodiversity and to what extent it includes gender equality objectives. In 2020-21, a record high 63% of aid to biodiversity from DAC members also included gender equality objectives.

Figure 9. ODA to climate with gender equality objectives (shares and volumes)

Average 2020-21, 2020 constant prices



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System database, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=crs1.

3.3. Supporting gender equality in conflict and fragile settings

No country defined as a fragile context[18] is on track to achieve SDGs related to hunger, good health, education, or gender equality, and it is clear that despite progress in expanding girls' access to education globally, girls in fragile contexts leave school more often and sooner than boys (OECD, 2022[149]). Moreover, data gaps exist on female enrolment ratios and completion rates, as recognised by the Elmau Progress Report 2022 of Canada's Charlevoix 2018 Education Initiative. Given that gender inequalities are often a root cause of fragility and that strengthening gender equality and the rights, representation, and resources of women and marginalised groups in all their diversity can contribute to building resilience within countries, increasing the focus on the drivers of fragility also implies increasing the focus on gender equality. Increased collaboration and joined-up approaches by humanitarian, development, and peace actors is necessary to reduce the growing inequality gaps, such as women's economic and political participation, and gender-based violence. Likewise, gender equality plays a major role in the ability to provide – and build – peaceful, resilient, and inclusive societies – both during and following crises. (OECD, 2021[150]). In fragile contexts, power dynamics between G7 countries and partner country governments are often stark. Addressing the root causes of fragility, including gender inequalities, is often politically sensitive, yet particularly important (OECD, 2022[118]).

All G7 countries have National Action Plans (NAPs) in place in order to implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS), which set out their specific focus, framed around conflict prevention, protection of all persons from conflict-related sexual violence and ending gender-based violence, women's participation, and leadership, increasing accountability, security and justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, increasing institutional capacities, and effectively monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the National Action Plan. The EU has an Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security.

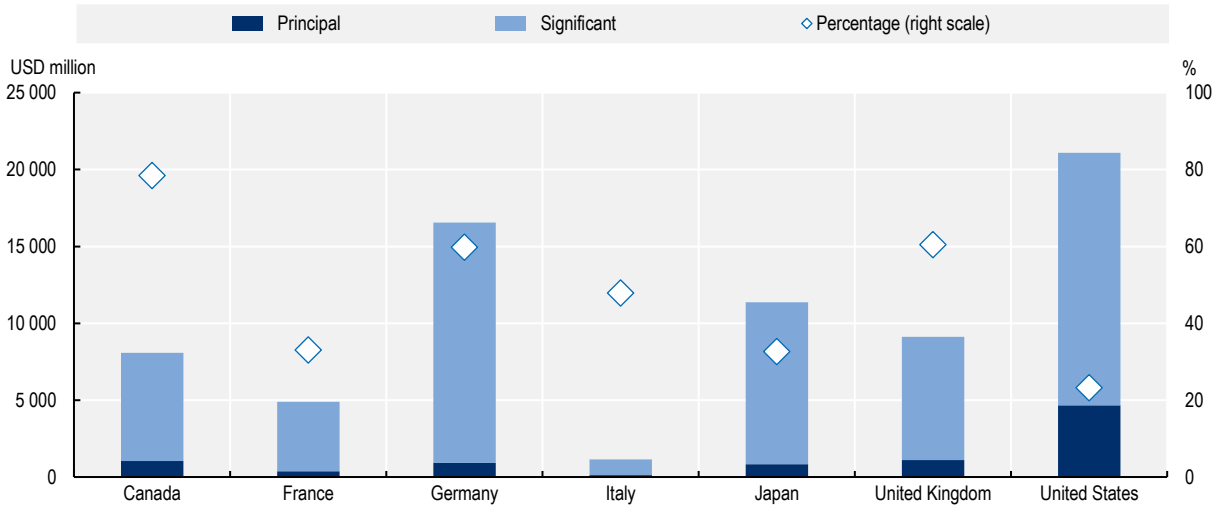
[18] Fragility is the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacities of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragile contexts account for a quarter (24%) of the world's population but three-quarters (73%) of people living in extreme poverty worldwide (OECD, 2022[149]).

Canada's most recent WPS NAP – it's second iteration, is for the period 2017-22 (Government of Canada, 2017[151]) and the subsequent NAP, which is intended to cover the period of 2023-29, is in the process of being finalised. **Germany's** WPS NAP 2021-24 is the third incarnation (Federal Foreign Office Germany, 2021[152]), as is **France's** WPS NAP, for 2021-25 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021[153]). **Italy** adopted its fourth WPS NAP for 2020-24 (Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights, 2020[154]). **Japan's** third edition WPS NAP was adopted in 2023 for 2023-28 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019[155]). The **United Kingdom's** WPS NAP stretches from 2023-27 (UK Government, 2023[156]). The **United States'** WPS NAP (2019) sets out to make demonstrable progress by 2023 (U.S. Department of State, 2019[157]). The United States is currently updating their Strategic Implementation Plan for the WPS NAP. The EU's Action plan for WPS is for the period 2019-24 (European External Action Service 2019).

As members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, G7 countries contribute and report aid for gender equality in fragile contexts. While the **United States** provides the largest total amount, **Canada** has the highest share of gender equality focussed aid in fragile contexts (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Shares and volumes of bilateral ODA with gender equality objectives in fragile contexts

Average 2020-21, 2020 constant prices



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System database, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=crs1.

4 Policies that address gender-based violence

Biarritz Declaration on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Paragraph 18

"... We also reaffirm our commitment to preventing and responding to all forms of gender-based violence...."

Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communiqué (2021), Paragraph 46

".... In recognition of increased violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 crisis, we commit to preventing, responding to and eliminating all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV).We will achieve this through women's empowerment and by scaling-up implementation of evidence-based, accessible survivor and victim-centred policies, prevention and support programmes, including through our pandemic response and recovery at home, in partner countries and in conflict zones. We acknowledge our collective responsibility to beneficiaries and partners, their communities, and survivors to do more to address sexual exploitation and abuse in international aid. We condemn GBV against women and girls and denounce the use of sexual violence in conflict situations and underscore that such acts may constitute crimes against humanity or war crimes. Increasing women's involvement in the economy – such as by closing the gender gaps in credit and entrepreneurship, and by enhancing women's access to capital, networks, and markets – can have dramatically positive economic impacts...."

Elmau G7 Leaders Communiqué (2018), Page 23

"...We will improve documentation and accountability for human rights violations and abuses, such as sexual and gender-based violence, including in conflict situations. We reiterate the need to strengthen the implementation of international architecture to prevent and respond to conflict related sexual violence, and will support the empowerment of women and girls as critical agents for conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution, relief and recovery, and long-term peace building..."

4.1. Support lives free from gender-based violence through integrated service delivery

4.1.1. Intimate partner violence is a complex problem requiring an integrated response

Women continue to bear the overwhelming consequences of gender-based violence (GBV), commonly at the hands of their current or former male intimate partners – a phenomenon known as intimate partner violence – IPV (OECD, 2020[158]).[19] IPV is reported by women across age groups, cultures, geographies and socio-economic backgrounds. Globally, in 2018 around 26% of ever-married/partnered women

[19] Men in heterosexual relationships, and people in same-sex relationships, also experience IPV, although in this case, motivation for violence is more often rooted in interpersonal or psychosocial dynamics rather than in *gendered* conceptions of superiority. As with violence against women, violence against members of the LGBTQAI+ community is gender-based in that it is motivated by prejudice and an illusion of hetero-masculine superiority among offenders. Statistically, women experience GBV most often at the hands of their male partners, adding a layer of complexity to help-seeking.

aged 15 and older reported having experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence at the hand of an intimate partner (WHO, 2021[159]). On average across OECD countries, nearly a quarter of all women report having experienced IPV in their lifetime (OECD Family Database, 2020[160]).[20] Yet as dire as these numbers seem, violence is typically underreported and statistics underestimate its prevalence.

Many governments have made the victim/survivor-centred prevention, treatment, and eradication of GBV a policy priority. Yet addressing the multifaceted issues of GBV presents a serious governance and implementation challenge – a challenge where most countries have fallen short (OECD, 2023[161]).[21]

Part of the challenge comes from the fact that GBV victims/survivors have complex needs both during and after experiencing violence, with implications for the form of service delivery they need. Threats to their health include injuries, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, complications of pregnancy, mental health problems, homicide, and suicide. As a first stop, many women fleeing IPV seek support from the public authorities through entry points in emergency medical care, police interventions, and emergency housing shelters. Many women also (whether simultaneously or subsequently) need support services linked to safety planning, rehabilitative counselling, legal advocacy, children, income, housing, and immigration and asylum, as well as financial and job counselling in many cases. When violence occurs within a family, within partnerships, or within close social relationships, the challenges are compounded: children and other persons within the same family or close social circles are affected by the violence and may need support.

To address their needs, victims/survivors must regularly navigate a range of social services provided by a patchwork of governmental, non-governmental or private sector providers. They are often asked to repeat accounts of traumatic experiences multiple times, as services are infrequently "joined up" and providers rarely share client data. Frequently, women seeking help encounter administrative and bureaucratic challenges at the same time as they face the direct and indirect consequences of violent acts – or remain under threat of continued violence (OECD, 2020[158]). These obstacles can be exacerbated by a lack of confidence in the help-seeking process more generally (OECD, 2023[161]).[22] The burden of applying for and accessing diverse support services, often repeatedly, can compound the trauma of victimisation and explain why women stay in situations where violence continues.

Policy makers in the G7 have turned their attention to *integrated policies* as a means of co-ordinating multisectoral solutions and better preventing, addressing, and responding to gender-based violence. This requires a whole-of-government approach and entails integration at all levels of government, including the service delivery level. G7 countries have made progress in recent years in promoting integrated service delivery for victims/survivors, as part of broader efforts to ensure their human rights and economic and social empowerment.

To foster integration, many national governments in the OECD have *implemented national* strategies and clearly defined roles for key state actors and partners as part of a systems-level approach to preventing, addressing, and ending GBV. Strategic frameworks for GBV can help improve decision-making processes

[20] These cross-nationally comparable estimates include all women, not only ever-partnered women.

[21] The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence – "the Istanbul Convention", is a human rights treaty of the Council of Europe opposing violence against women and domestic violence. The European G7 countries France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom have ratified, and the European Union has acceded to the convention. For examples of evaluations of compliance with Istanbul Convention minimum standards in European OECD countries see (WAVE Network, 2019[190]; Council of Europe, 2022[191]).

[22] Affected women may feel as though their case may not be "taken seriously" through traditional reporting channels such as the police, or that help-seeking options may fall short of long-term solutions that ensure safety and security. For a review of these challenges, see, for example: (Glenn, 2021[192]; Mundy and Seuffert, 2021[193]; Moylan, Lindhorst and Tajima, 2017[194]; Fusco, 2013[195]).

by focusing attention on the most crucial issues and challenges, as well as co-ordinating policy implementation and – importantly – funding across levels and functions of government (OECD, 2021[162]; 2019[132]). These frameworks often include targets, road maps and action plans.

In **Canada**, for example, the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers responsible for the Status of Women launched the first National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (NAP to End GBV) in November 2022. The NAP to End GBV builds on the foundation laid by the Federal Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV, and Government of Canada investments. The federal government is investing additional funds over 5 years to support Canada's 13 provinces and territories to implement the NAP to end GBV in their respective jurisdictions**.** In May 2023, the **United States** released its first-ever U.S. National Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, described as a "comprehensive, government-wide approach" covering prevention; support, healing, safety, and well-being; economic security and housing stability; online safety; legal and justice systems; emergency preparedness and crisis response; and research and data (The White House, 2023[97]). In **Italy**, the most recent National Strategic Plan on Male Violence Against Women (2021-23) prioritises improving the effectiveness of integrated service delivery, including developing monitoring mechanisms in conjunction with the National Statistical Institute of Italy. Following a law approved in 2022 the National Statistic Programme will be enriched with data and information on GBV in order to monitor this phenomenon and develop public policies in this field. A network of around 384 anti-violence centres and 399 shelters across Italy provide multi-disciplinary support for women escaping violence.

4.1.2. Integrated policies to improve service delivery to victims/survivors across G7 countries

Integrated service delivery (ISD) to address gender-based violence is far from systematic: fewer than half of responding OECD national governments (48%) report promoting ISD "somewhat" or "to a great extent" in their countries. Barely half (51%) report targeted investments to support service providers in further expanding, improving, or transitioning to ISD (OECD, 2023[161]).

To improve policy responses to GBV, ISD – multisectoral co-operation/co-ordination across agencies, takes a variety of forms. Across countries, this includes the physical co-location of services; the use of case managers; informal or formal referral networks, which can be initiated through emergency contact (e.g. phone lines or websites) or through social service offices; information-sharing and training co-ordination across agencies; and/or deep co-operation across agencies, working together on individual cases towards pre-determined and consistent goals. ISD practices are applied in healthcare, justice, housing, child-related services, and income support. ISD is reportedly most frequently introduced at entry points in healthcare, housing, and police services.

4.1.3. The health sector is a common centre for ISD to address GBV

The health sector is one of the most common points of entry to public services for women escaping violence, as victims/survivors face a range of threats to their health: injuries, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy complications, and mental health problems. GBV can result in homicide or suicide.

Some countries have developed national strategies to promote better co-ordinated healthcare around experiences of violence. In the **United Kingdom**, the Department of Health and Social Care is working with NHS England & NHS Improvement, who have published a five-year Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services to ensure all victims, including children, receive joined-up pathways of care over the course of their lifetime whenever they need it (NHS England, 2018[163]). The Public Health Agency of **Canada** supports capacity-building for professionals in recognising and safely responding to GBV, and funds health promotion interventions in at least 35 community-based organisations to help build the

evidence base on what works in responding to GBV. In **Italy**, the 2017 “Pathways for women subjected to violence” was adopted into the National Guidelines for Health Authorities via Prime Ministerial Decree. The programme, which is left to regional authorities to implement, seeks to ensure timely and integrated support for women through the health sector. The Pathway is initiated after trained health professionals identify a survivor/victim. Consenting women are then referred to dedicated regional supports, such as local anti-violence centres, to develop safety planning, access advocates and other resources.

At the national level, governments seeking to integrate service delivery for victims/survivors have most frequently connected services deployed from hospitals and embedded ISD in mental health supports.

The role of hospitals

Within wider healthcare systems, hospitals and emergency medical centres have been shown to be an important site for ISD as these are where many victims/survivors come in time of crisis. Countries with publicly funded healthcare systems are also well-placed to co-ordinate responses nationally to implement integrated GBV supports. Co-located case management and referral models to support victims/survivors are reported throughout the OECD and play an important role over time: they help respond to crises in the immediate aftermath of violence, while also providing the infrastructure for longer-term health resources.

The experience in **Austria** in particular, illustrates the feature of widely integrated related services for GBV in hospitals: all hospitals are obliged by law to establish “victim protection groups” for women experiencing domestic violence. These groups are responsible for facilitating early detection and prevention of domestic violence through awareness raising among hospital colleagues. These groups also establish networks of cross-sectoral actors, including police, shelters, social workers, and helpline operators which can then be mobilised to support help-seeking individuals.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Secretary of State for Health, through NHS England, has commissioned 47 sexual assault referral centres (SARCs), which provide an integrated response to sexual violence and rape. These centres received GBP 27 million in 2017/18, GBP 31 million in 2018/19, GBP 35 million in 2019/20, and GBP 37.5m in 2020/21. SARCs are commissioned in collaboration with Police and Crime Commissioners. SARCs are available to all victims and survivors of sexual violence and abuse, who are offered direct access or referral to an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (OECD, 2023[161]).

At the same time, not all health needs are best met in hospitals. Community-based care is recognised as the preferred approach for most of mental health care, for instance (OECD, 2021[164]). All OECD countries either already deliver the majority of mental health services outside of hospitals or have prioritised the transition to community-based care models – with the potential to deliver care that is less costly than in-patient care, more in line with service users’ preferences, and better integrated with other public services. This relates to the use of IPV screening tools in routine medical care and could be reflected in ISD responses to IPV in the coming years (OECD, 2023[161]).

Mental health programmes

The Lancet Psychiatry Commission lists a range of mental health disorders that are more common among people who have experienced IPV than those who have not, including “anxiety, depression, substance use disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), personality disorders, psychosis, self-harm, and suicidality” (Oram et al., 2022[165]). Reflecting these concerns, several OECD countries have established integrated mental health support co-ordinated at the national level.

In **Denmark**, for example, since 2020, municipal governments are obliged to offer up to ten hours of free, psychological counselling to women who are staying – or who have stayed – at a shelter as a result of domestic violence. Municipalities are also obliged to offer at least four, and up to ten, hours of psychological support to children accompanying women in this context. Sessions can be used both during and after shelter stays (OECD, 2023[161]).

Other countries provide mental health support through multidisciplinary counselling centres. In **Japan**, the national and subnational governments jointly fund and operate over 100 spousal violence counselling and support centres which respond to women's mental health needs and accompany them to related medical appointments (OECD, 2023[161]).

4.1.4. Housing is critical to supporting victims/survivors in crisis and in the long run

Intimate partner violence is a leading cause of women and children's homelessness throughout the OECD, and any efforts to address IPV must consider how to support victims/survivors in what often appears as rebuilding their lives. National governments in the OECD finance and/or administer emergency, transitional and – occasionally – longer-term housing support for women and children fleeing violence.

Emergency shelters

Emergency shelters play a key role in offering safe haven for women escaping an abusive home and preventing homelessness for women at risk of violence. Emergency shelters are also an important intake site for integrated access to social services and housing support services. Shelters can be general (for anyone in the population) or dedicated to women experiencing violence. Yet while emergency shelters play an important role, very few countries actually offer an adequate number of spaces to meet demand. Some shelters offer counselling on-site, many offer linkages or referrals to health services, and many provide child-related services (e.g. counselling for children), legal advocacy, and linkages to long-term housing. In **Italy**, for example, income and entrepreneurship support can be applied for through violence protection centres. **Germany** innovated during COVID-19 to improve the digital competencies of women's shelters. The project "Helpsystem 2.0" supports women's shelters and specialist support services with the professional handling of the digital needs related to the pandemic. The project focuses on improving technical equipment, the necessary digital qualification of staff and the professional translation of support for women and girls affected by violence (OECD, 2023[161]).

Joined-up, co-located service provision takes the form of "one-stop shops" where victims/survivors can access services including mental and physical healthcare, legal support, employment support, and help for their families, sometimes in the same place as emergency shelter. This is increasingly common in the **EU** (e.g. the European Family Justice Centres), including **France** (e.g. Maison des Femmes); the **United States** (e.g. the Family Justice Center Alliance); and, **Japan** (OECD, 2023[161]).

Transitional and longer-term housing

Some countries have policies to help *women transition out of shelters and into safe long-term housing*. The federal Government of **Canada** provides funds for the construction, maintenance, renovation and expansion of shelter and transitional housing, and affordable housing, for victims/survivors of GBV through initiatives including the "Women and Children Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative" and the "Indigenous Shelter and Transitional Housing Initiative".

Looking to the longer term, a few countries report special provisions within existing social housing schemes which prioritise access to women who are experiencing IPV. This is the case in **Japan**, for example. Unfortunately, these provisions exist in an environment of social housing scarcity across OECD countries, which means few women are able to access social housing. In the **United States**, where federal housing funds are more often allocated sub-nationally, a portion of federal housing funding is reserved for sub-national agencies to provide shelter and support for women and children experiencing domestic violence. The **United States'** new national strategy will fund Technical Assistance Providers to provide training, technical assistance, and other support to grantees (of the Department of Housing and Urban Development), housing providers and other stakeholders on GBV implementation (The White House, 2023[97]).

4.1.5. The justice sector's role in a co-ordinated response

A critical consideration in ISD to address IPV is the client's risk of exposure to violence, their heightened need for security, and, often, their need for police involvement and access to justice. Consequently, ISD measures to address IPV are often connected with police and legal advocacy support. Because legal issues and procedures are tied with other social, economic, health, or employment issues, a holistic response to GBV requires strong collaborations among organisations *within* the justice system *between* the justice system and other sectors, and across levels of government (OECD, 2021[162]). In the **United States**, for example, the Justice Department's Office on Violence against Women (OVW) administers federal funds to implement the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) across individual states and territories to reduce and address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking by strengthening service delivery and holding offenders accountable. In Italy for example, proposed legislation under consideration by the Senate in November/December 2023, purports that if the victim of violence is not heard within three days, the prosecutor will be able to revoke the assignment of the case, assigning it to a magistrate who is able to intervene immediately.

As with other sectors, there is room for improvement in support for victims/survivors. The legal system can be hard to navigate for non-experts, and many victims/survivors have low trust in police being able or willing to support them. To some degree, this reluctance may be justified given historical cultures of victim-blaming and down-prioritisation of GBV cases by police (OECD, 2023[161]).

Police

Police are sometimes gatekeepers to accessing justice and other important supports, as reporting a crime can be an entry point to access important interventions and safety. Police work on the ground to respond to emergencies, support women in administrative processes where civil or criminal charges are pursued or imposed, and initiate related, inter-disciplinary services.

Some police are embedded in formal referral networks to related providers. For example, in several EU countries police are required to contact social support services and link them with the women experiencing violence (OECD, 2023[161]).

Co-location of related services in police stations is another strategy. For example, **Denmark** has established interdisciplinary service provision in police stations, while **Portugal** has established specialised women's police stations that are well-trained to deal with cases of violence.

Just as importantly, police play an important role in *preventing* the reoccurrence of violence. The effective use of risk/danger assessments by police – informed by specialised training – and the correct application of emergency restraining/barring orders are an important step to keep perpetrators from carrying out further harm (OECD, 2023[161]). Police are also well-placed to deal with perpetrators of violence and initiate an integrated response to address violence at the source.

Legal advocacy services

To ensure that more victims/survivors can make use of the legal frameworks that exist to support them, targeted justice services have emerged to better support women in the wake of IPV. Legal advocacy services and the court system, including domestic violence courts, facilitate women's access to justice and enable ISD with other sectors.

Several national initiatives exist in the OECD to support women in accessing justice through legal support, including some policies with multidisciplinary or integrated approaches (OECD, 2023[161]). In **Austria and Portugal**, for example, dedicated multidisciplinary counselling centres have been established which provide psycho-social counselling in addition to legal counselling and court navigation support to improve access to justice.

In **Canada**, the Department of Justice provides funding to provinces, territories, and non-governmental organisations to fund lawyers to provide advice and/or representation to survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence, and to support victims of family violence involved in the family justice system. Through Pillar 3 of the GBV NAP (see Section 4.1.1), Canada will work to strengthen justice system responses to GBV and calls for increased accessibility and improved confidence in the Canadian justice system.

The United Kingdom has established dedicated domestic violence courts which apply trauma-informed practices to empower women as they appeal for justice. Domestic violence courts apply specialised knowledge to better enforce orders, jointly delivered with police, that protect women. Domestic violence courts can also play an important role in enforcing perpetrator accountability through offender intervention programmes (OECD, 2023[161]).

4.2. Addressing GBV globally: Policies and institutional frameworks that support SEAH prevention and response

Sexual Exploitaiton Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) is a form of gender-based violence (GBV), which continues to be prepetrated across many societies and contexts.[23] Although abuse has been widespread and prevelant for many years, increased political attention was brought to the issue notably in 2018, after several cases and allegations gained further attention both internationally and at the national level in G7 countries.[24]

All international actors, including G7 Members, have the responsibility to operate safely in development and humanitarian contexts in a way that does no harm, and work in partnership across actors and communities. As development partners and members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), G7 countries have an important role to play in taking leadership and demonstrating national and international policies, practices, and programmes that contribute to ending gender-based violence and SEAH globally. As signatories to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, G7 Members have also committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.[25]

Since 2017-18, G7 Members have made increased commitments to ending SEAH. In 2018, the Whistler declaration on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in international assistance was made at the G7 Ministerial Meeting on Investing in Growth that Works for Everyone (Government of Canada, 2018[166]). In 2019, all G7 Members, as Members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)[26] adopted the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance [OECD/LEGAL/5020] (*hereforth* "DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH"). In 2021, G7 Members re-affirmed their commitment to the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH, through urging adherence to the DAC Recommendation by all actors involved in the delivery of aid in the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting communiqué (G7 Foreign and Development

[23] Definitions of sexual exploitation abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) are based on international standards, notably those established by the United Nations (UN) UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

[24] This includes, among other cases, abuse in Haiti, which prompted additional attention and responses from many international organisations, civil society organisations, and governments (including G7 members) Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector: next steps.

[25] SDG 5.2 "Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation" Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs (un.org).

[26] For the full list of OECD DAC members: Development Assistance Committee (DAC) - OECD; current list of adherents to the DAC Recommendation include 32 DAC Member Governments and 4 UN agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNOPS): OECD Legal Instruments.

Ministers, 2021[167]).The OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH marked a significant commitment by G7 governments, as the first international instrument of its kind; and demonstrated both individual and collective responsibility to dedicate expertise and mobilise resources to SEAH prevention and response. The commitments made by G7 Members across the six pillars[27] of the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH importantly addresses instances of both SEA and SH – taking into account abuse that occurs within institutions or governments, and in development and humanitarian contexts.

4.2.1. Policies and institutional frameworks that support SEAH prevention and response

Comprehensive institutional policy frameworks are one foundation of strong systems for SEAH prevention and response. G7 Members have developed policies, strategies, and action plans, in addition to ethical operational standards, codes of conduct, and communications with staff and management. Policies and action plans support co-ordination across the government's, activities, policies, practices, and initiatives; as well as accountability and responsibility across institutions; and, monitoring and evaluation efforts in the area of SEAH prevention and response. Within G7 members – as elsewhere, efforts on SEAH prevention and response are often led by development agencies of foreign affairs ministries, but require a cross-government approach and consistent political leadership. A government's approach to SEAH and GBV more broadly, can be reinforced by policies at both the domestic and international levels.

Since 2017, all G7 Members, to different degrees, have established and strengthened institutional frameworks on SEAH prevention and response. **Canada** has developed a structured approach to guide sexual exploitation and abuse prevention and response efforts**.** Canada's development agency, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has a departmental Values and Ethics Code as well as the Code of Conduct for Canadian Representatives Abroad (Government of Canada, 2011[168]) including addressing SEAH. Canada also has established policies and guidelines on SEAH prevention and response available to all staff, and specifically for implementing partner organisations as well, outlining their responsibilities for notifying credible allegations of SEA (Global Affairs Canada, 2022[169]), and clear definitions of the department's expectations (Global Affairs Canada, 2019[170]). **France's** Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) has created a "Zero Tolerance" Unit and listening cell, with the aim of dealing with cases of harassment, including sexual harassment, and gender-based violence cases in the work environment. **France**'s Development Agency (AFD) has a charter on ethics, as well as internal guidelines for the prevention of harassment (Agence Française de Développement, 2022[171]). They have also established, a publicly available, complaints mechanism (Agence Française de Développement, 2021[172]).

Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) both have internal policies and guidelines concerning SEAH. SEAH allegations in relation to implementing partners are investigated by the implementing partners who are required to report all credible allegations to the GFFO. The GFFO records the relevant data and monitors the response and follow-up of the implementing partner, ensuring that it takes places in an adequate, timely and survivor-centreed way. The German Agency for International Co-operation also has an online whistleblower portal (GIZ, 2023[173]). **Italy** and its Agency for Development Co-operation (AICS) has an Ethics Code which encompasses staff, but also stakeholder personnel, and corporate behaviour (AICS, 2020[174]); as well as a dedicated Code on SEAH, approved in 2020 (AICS, 2020[175]). This code also applies to informal and formal procedures around allegations of SEAH, and also for support services for SEAH victim/survivors. **Japan's** International Co-operation Agency (JICA) has a code of conduct, internal policies and guidelines

[27] The DAC Recommendation is built around six pillars: (i) Policies, professional conduct standards, organisational change, and leadership; (ii) Survivor/victim-centred response and support mechanisms; (iii) Organisational reporting, response systems and procedures; (iv) Training, awareness raising and communication; (v) International co-ordination; and (vi) Monitoring, evaluation, shared learning and reporting.

concerning SEAH and has also established a complaint mechanism specialised for SEAH, and has re-iterated its commitment to SEAH prevention and response as a priority.

The **United Kingdom** has a dedicated SEAH strategy, published in 2020, which builds on their commitments at the 2018 London Safeguarding Summit (HM Government, 2020[176]). The UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) chairs a working group of UK Government departments to support implementation of the Strategy and provides publicly available guidance on safeguarding against SEAH in the aid sector. The FCDO also supports dialogue and lesson learning on progress of London 2018 commitments and Preventing SEAH (PSEAH) policy and standards by chairing a series of quarterly meetings with a range of international partners, including G7 members (FCDO, 2019[177]); and by publishing annual reports on progress monitors progress on implementation of the London Summit Commitments (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development, 2022[178]). The FCDO is co-ordinating an international effort to agree a Common Approach to Protection from SEAH (CAPSEAH) for the humanitarian, development and peacekeeping sectors, to revitalise global commitment and collective action to tackle SEAH. The **United States** has publicly available policies concerning the prevention from and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, including most recently in 2022 (USAID, 2020[179]). The US has introduced a Safeguarding Partner Toolkit which includes links to relevant statements and reports, guidance and other guiding materials (USAID, 2023[180]). The US also launched the Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally, updated in 2022 (USAID, 2022[181]).

The **European Commission** has also adopted approaches to set clear guidelines and policies relating to SEAH. This includes provisions for humanitarian aid funding, including a 'zero tolerance' approach towards SEAH as well as any (other) type of unethical behaviour (DG ECHO, 2021[182]). The EC has also strengthened its complaints and reporting mechanisms (European Commision, 2023[183]) and reporting guidelines and requirements with implementing partners (DG ECHO, 2021[182]).

4.2.2. Victim/survivor-centred approach as a cross-cutting priority

In their adoption of the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH, G7 Members committed to "provide for a **survivor-and victim-centred approach** to SEAH prevention and response, where survivors and victims' experiences, rights, needs, and wants are at the centre" (OECD/LEGAL/5020). When SEAH is perpetrated, there is harm and long-term damage inflicted on individuals and their communities, and different actors, including G7 Members, share responsibility to promote the well-being, healing, and recovery of an individual and/or community affected, as well as to pursue measures to hold the perpetrator accountable.

As a cross-cutting objective, several G7 Members have explicitly integrated a victim/survivor-centred approach to their policies and systems; and have also provided additional support for victim/survivors. For example, the **United States** has established a victim/survivor-centred approach as a central pillar to their efforts both on SEAH and GBV, including in reporting and accountability mechanisms, and prioritising prevention efforts (USAID, 2020[179]). **Canada's** reporting guidelines on SEA allegations (Global Affairs Canada, 2019[170]) were designed with a victim/survivor-centred approach, and aim to ensure the adoption of that approach through the whole process of reporting. Canada has also supported the Digna Hub (Digna & Global Affairs Canada, 2022[184]), which takes a victim/survivor-centred approach to sharing materials and increasing capacity of different kinds of organisations, including templates, resources, trainings and other services to address and to help close existing prevention capacity gaps in the sector, including safe reporting and response for survivors and victims. The **United Kingdom** has a Support to Survivors programme, which aims to bring perpetrators of SEAH in the aid sector to justice and provide vital support for survivors (FCDO, 2021[185]). France, Japan and the United Kingdom are board members of the Global Survivors Fund (GSF), to which the European Union also contributes along with these G7 members. GSF was launched in 2019 to enhance access to reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence

around the globe. As board members these countries contribute to supporting survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in conflict-affected area (GSF, 2023[186]).

4.2.3. Key factors to support effective implementation of policies and frameworks

Since the adoption of the 2019 DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH, OECD research and support to implementation of the DAC Recommendation by G7 Members and others demonstrates that there are several key factors to ensure effective implementation of SEAH policies and commitments (see below) (OECD, 2023[148]; 2021[187]).

Leadership and organisational culture

Improving organisational culture and maintaining leadership (nationally and internationally) to support efforts around SEAH remains important. G7 Members committed in the DAC Recommendation to "*foster improved **organisational culture and norms** through effective value-based leadership and guidance on goals, values, behaviours, and expectations related to SEA and SH prevention and response, including the promotion of inclusive, non-discriminatory, gender-balanced work environments and opportunities*" and "*ensure **sustained senior-level engagement and leadership** commitments to shift or sustain positive organisational culture and norms in relation to SEA and SH prevention and response*" (OECD/LEGAL/5020).

Despite the increased adoption of policies and institutional frameworks by G7 Members, and many other international actors, SEAH continues to be perpetrated in many contexts (UN GA, 2023[188]). It is, therefore, imperative to address the underlying factors that continue to support the perpetration of abuse. Abuse is also often facilitated by impunity; and is made possible by insufficient roadblocks rooted in the values held in an organisation's culture. Safe working environments are essential to preventing all forms of abuse of power; and all societies, and all organisations, are impacted by societal and systemic inequalities. Safe working environments are built on values of integrity, openness, trust, and respect, which counteract impunity, supporting clear, fair, and appropriate responses when a wrong or harmful action is perpetrated. Unsafe working environments have many integrity-related issues and forms of misconduct, including but not limited to, SEAH. An institution's culture has implications internally and externally. Governments and organisations cannot adequately tackle sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment without transparently challenging the power dynamics within their own institutional cultures and ensuring that equality and representation are delivered at every level within their institutions (OECD, 2023[148]).

International co-ordination

G7 Members continue to strengthen their efforts on SEAH prevention and response through increased co-ordination with DAC Member Governments and other partner governments, international organisations, international financial institutions, civil society actors, and other local actors. This includes, since 2018, collaboration through the OECD DAC Reference Group on Ending SEAH, and learning with other actors around implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Ending SEAH.

SEAH prevention and response, and ending the perpetration of SEAH, requires a co-ordinated approach in a number of ways: (1) Co-ordination and alignment on international standards and approaches to tackling SEAH across the aid sector (humanitarian, development, and peacekeeping) to enhance coherence, increase aid integrity, reduce transaction costs and improve accountability and response to survivors; (2) Collaboration and co-ordination with stakeholders on support services including referral services for SEAH victim/survivors; (3) Co-ordination across SEAH reporting and complaints mechanisms, investigations, and data handling/sharing; (4) Co-ordination across human resource policies and employment practices; and, (5) outreach, inter-agency training and learning (OECD, forthcoming[189]).

Dedicated resources and financing

The international architecture around SEAH prevention and response faces certain systemic challenges, including a lack of adequate funding and resources. G7 Members have many roles and responsibilities in development and humanitarian contexts, with one significant role being that of donors. G7 Members contribute resources to SEAH prevention and response across a number of levels: (1) dedicating resources to preventing SEAH within their own institutions; (2) investing in capacity of partner organisations to prevent and respond to SEAH; (3) playing a role and providing resources to co-ordination mechanisms at the country-level, notably in development and humanitarian contexts; (4) investing in joint projects and initiatives; and (5) investing in development and humanitarian programming that improves the enabling environment for SEAH prevention and response.

Further efforts in terms of contributions by individual G7 Members across these dimensions, and alignment of donor efforts in SEAH prevention and response, remain a potential area for greater learning and improvement.

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