

INTRODUCTION

The financial and economic crisis has underlined the importance of making the best use of all our resources – including people – if we are to achieve sustainable growth that benefits everyone in the years to come. Making the most of the talent pool means ensuring that men and women, boys and girls, have a fair chance to contribute both at home and in the workplace.

Things have changed considerably in OECD countries in the past 50 years – more girls now complete tertiary education than boys, and on average in OECD countries more than half of the women have a paid job. But women still earn less than men, do more unpaid work such as housework and childcare and are more likely to end their lives in poverty, partly as a result of economic inequality and because they live longer than men.

Education, skills and jobs

Years of effort by OECD countries to end disadvantage against girls in the education system has resulted in a situation where girls are more likely to complete secondary education than boys and more women than men graduate from college – and there are now concerns in some countries that something needs to be done to help the boys. Since the beginning of the OECD's PISA tests of 15-year olds' competencies, in 2000, girls have always scored higher in reading than boys – and by a substantial margin: the equivalent of one full year of formal schooling.

Even though more women are graduating, they are still less likely to study sciences and to take jobs in scientific fields. This is of particular concern given a shortage of science graduates in many countries to fill the jobs available. There are signs that things are changing at least in the health sector, where more women are becoming doctors – 43% of doctors on average across OECD countries are women, up from 29% in 1990.

Whatever career women choose, they are likely to end up earning less than their male counterparts. On average, women earn 15% less than men in OECD countries, and are far less likely to be in parliament or on a company board. They also undertake fewer hours of paid work – men average 41 hours a week and women 35 hours – but spend more time on unpaid tasks. On average men in OECD countries spend just over two hours per day doing unpaid work, while women spend more than four and a half hours cooking, cleaning or caring.

Some of these imbalances are due to cultural norms and longstanding habits, but policy also has a role to play. Even if a man wants to stay at home to care for children, for example, it may be simply unaffordable because he is the main breadwinner.

What can be done to help make it easier for people to find the work-life balance that works best for them and their

family? Collecting and publishing gender data will raise public awareness of gender bias in the economy and society and ensure that the gender dimension is fully taken into account when crafting policies in every area, from pensions and employment to childcare and tax.

Note: The graphs show selected OECD countries. Additional countries are available in the Statlink.

Sources

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- Miranda, V. (2011), "Cooking, Caring and Volunteering: Unpaid Work around the World", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 116, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2012), *Closing the Gender Gap, Act Now*, OECD Publishing.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families*, OECD Publishing.

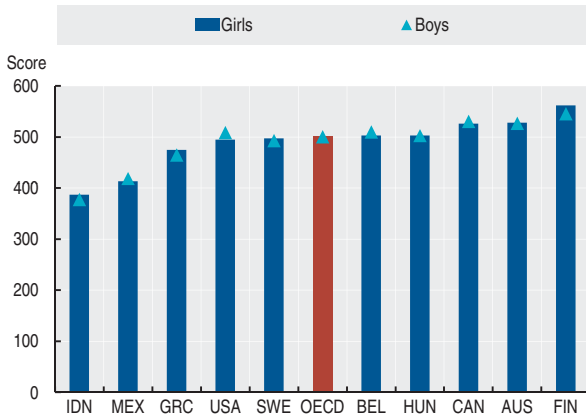
Websites

- OECD Better Life Index, www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org.
- OECD Education, www.oecd.org/education.



Student performance in science

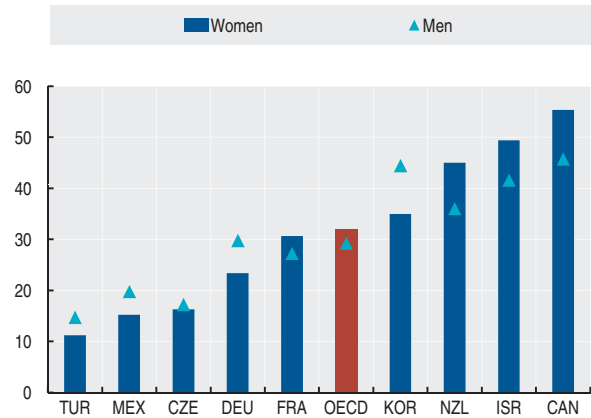
2009



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932706337>

People with tertiary education, by gender

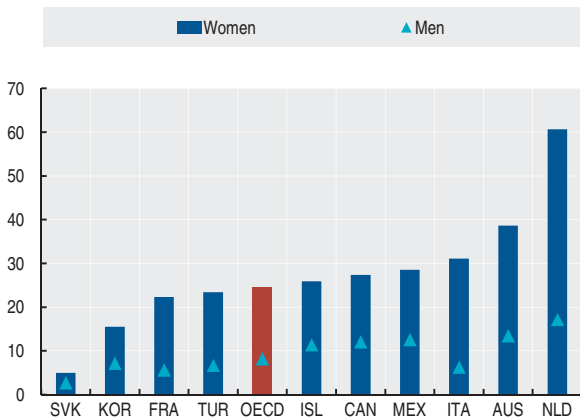
Percentage, 2010



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932707249>

Part-time employment

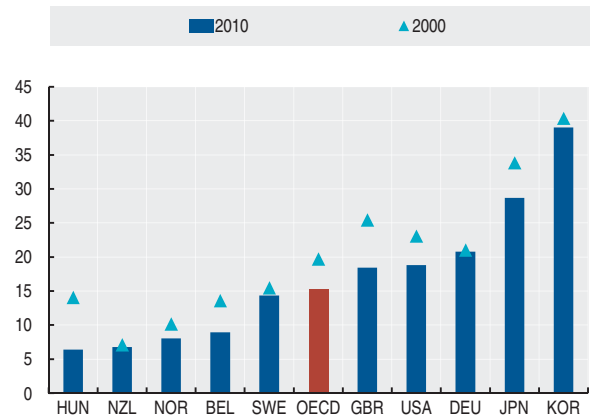
2010, percentage of total employment



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932676013>

Gender gap in median earnings for full-time employees

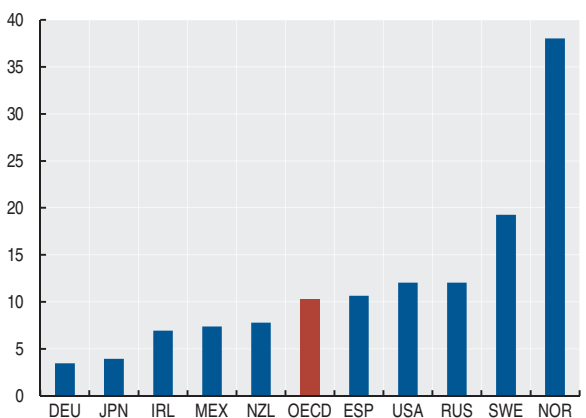
Percentage, 2000 and 2010 (or nearest year)



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932652282>

Share of women on boards

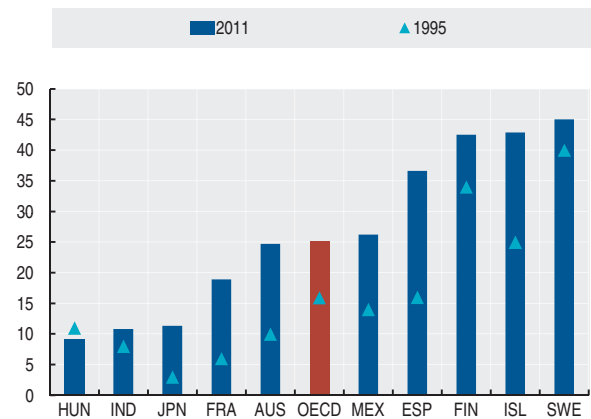
Percentage, 2009



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932676260>

Share of women in parliament

Percentage, 1995 and 2011



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932676317>



From:
OECD Factbook 2013
Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/factbook-2013-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2013), "Introduction", in *OECD Factbook 2013: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/factbook-2013-104-en>

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