

JOBS AND WAGES

Definition

The gender wage gap is unadjusted and is calculated as the difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men. Estimates of earnings used in the calculations refer to gross earnings of full-time wage and salary workers. Low pay is defined as less than two-thirds of gross median earnings of all full-time workers.

Overview

Girls are now doing as well as, if not better than, boys in most core subjects at school, but still earn 15% less on average in the OECD and are less likely to make it to the boardroom or senior management of companies.

The average gender gap in OECD countries has narrowed somewhat in recent years from 20% in 2000. And while the gender wage gap exists in all countries, its size varies considerably. The gap is narrowest in Hungary (6%) and Poland (10%) and broadest in Korea (39%) and Japan (29%).

Earnings tend to rise in line with people's level of education for both men and women. People with higher (tertiary) education can expect to earn 55% more on average in OECD countries than a person without tertiary education. Those who have not completed secondary education earn 23% less than those who have.

Nonetheless, across all countries and all levels of education, women earn less than men, and that gap actually increases with more education. A man with tertiary education can expect to generate a net return of USD 162 000 during his working life on the cost of his education, while the return for women is about a third less, at USD 110 000. The average net return on the cost of upper secondary education is close to USD 90 000 for men and USD 67 000 for women.

The gender gap runs right up the employment ladder – female top earners trail behind their male counterparts – but at the lower end of the pay scale it means that women are more likely to be in the low-paid bracket. About 18% of workers are low-paid on average in OECD countries for which figures are available, but the rate for women is 25%, while that for men is 14%.

Why is the gender wage gap so persistent? Girls at 15 are more ambitious than their male counterparts, but the reality of where men and woman actually work is very different from this aspiration. For example, among legislators, barely a quarter of parliamentarians in OECD countries are women, and no country has yet breached the 50% mark.

There is a similar gap between teenage aspiration and adult reality when it comes to managerial and professional positions. More girls may be aiming for jobs at this level at 15, but when they actually complete their tertiary studies almost twice as many men take up managerial posts, 9.7%

compared with 5.7% of women. In addition, on average in OECD countries less than one-third of managers are women.

Career stereotypes seem hard to shift; even when girls choose to study sciences, they are less likely to opt for a career in them – 71% of male graduates from the science field work as professionals in physics, mathematics and engineering, as opposed to 43% of female graduates.

One science area popular with women is the medical and health professions, where at least some ambitions are fulfilled. Certainly many more women are becoming doctors. In 2009, 43% of doctors on average across OECD countries were women, up from 29% in 1990.

Sources

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- OECD (2012), *OECD labour market statistics*.
- OECD (2012), "What Kinds of Careers do Boys and Girls Expect for Themselves?", *PISA in Focus*, No. 14.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2012), *Closing the Gender Gap, Act Now*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2012), "How Are Girls Doing in School – and Women Doing in Employment – Around the World?", *Education Indicators in Focus*, No. 3.

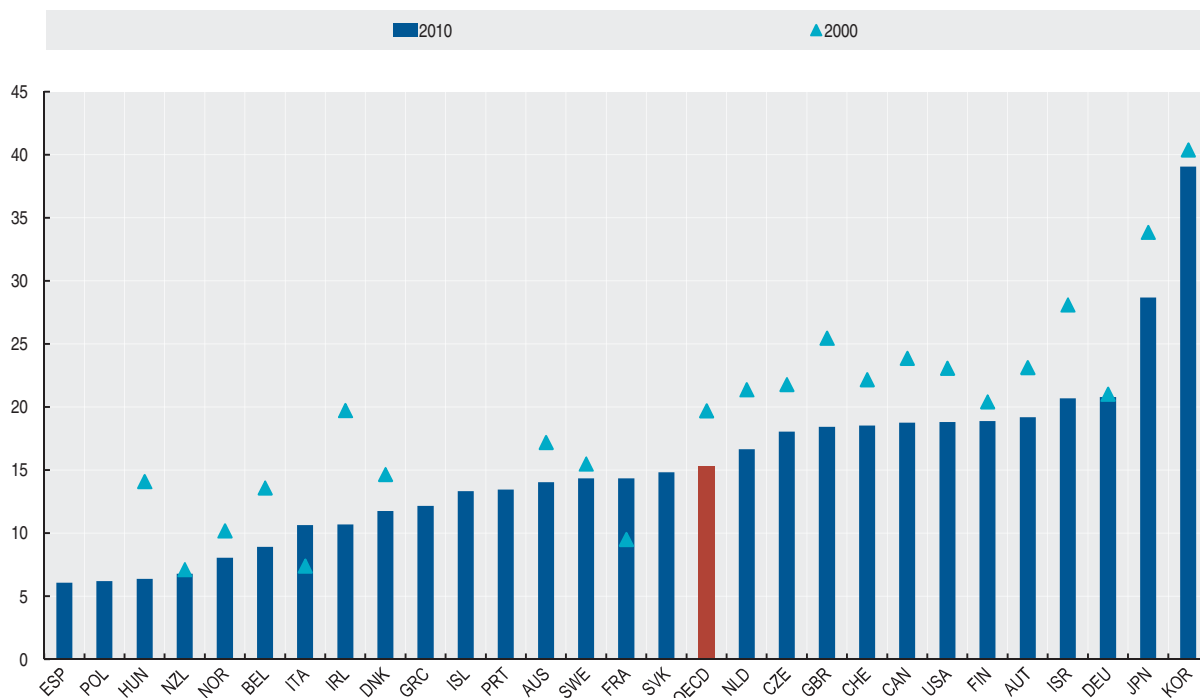
Websites

- OECD Education, www.oecd.org/education.
- OECD Employment Outlook (supplementary material), www.oecd.org/employment/outlook.
- OECD Gender, www.oecd.org/gender.



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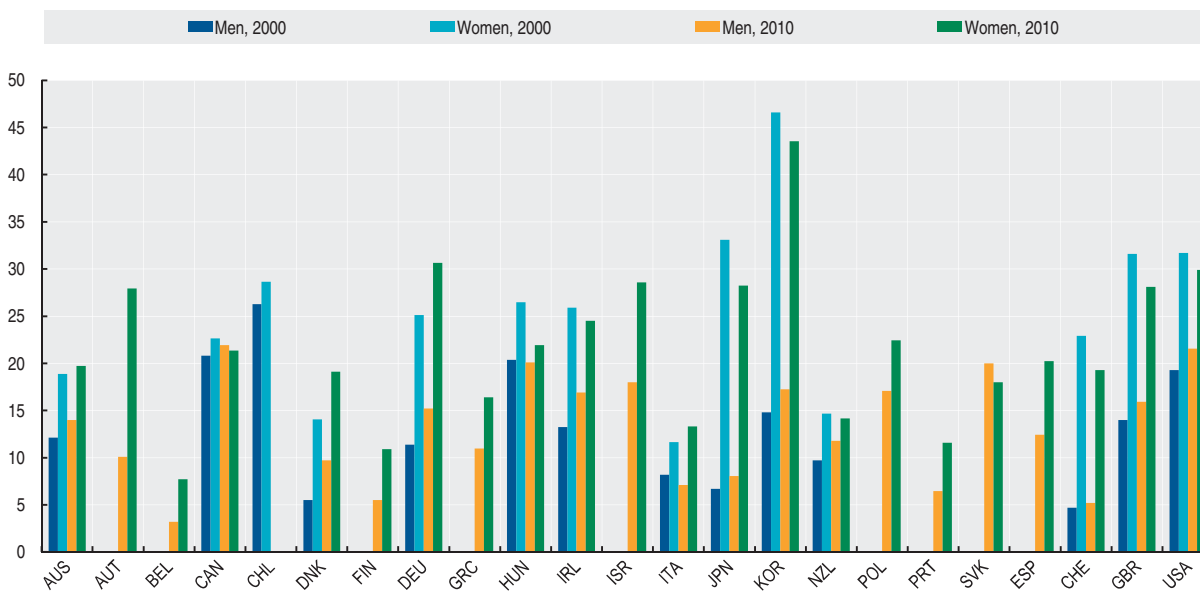
Percentage, 2000 and 2010



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

Incidence of low-paid workers by gender

Percentage, 2000 and 2010



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932707971>



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