Joining Forces for Gender Equality

WHAT IS HOLDING US BACK?

Country note: Italy

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

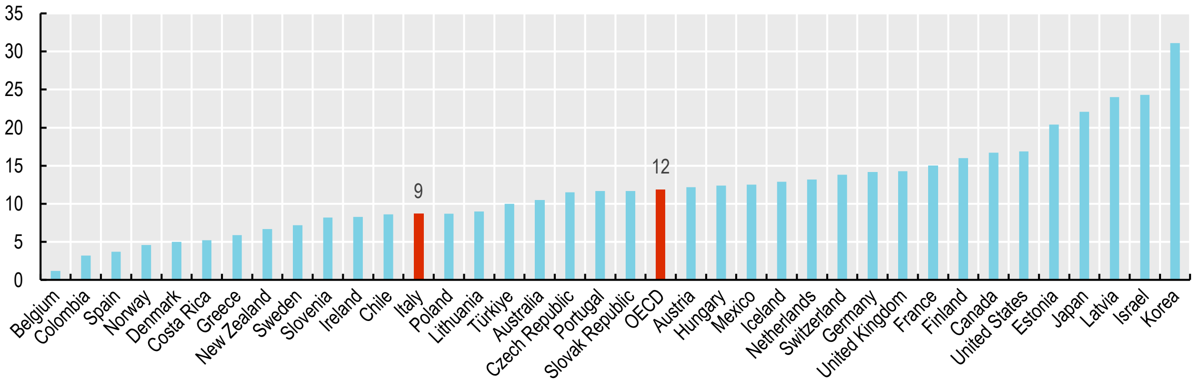
Gender equality in Italy

Italy has gender equality outcomes that are frequently close to the OECD average, but sometimes gender gaps are wider than elsewhere (Table 1). Gender gaps in the school performance of young men and women are slighly above the OECD average for reading, but much wider for mathematic scores. In terms of self-employment, Italy is at the OECD average, but the gender gap in labour force participation is among the widest in the OECD and the share of women in management positions is below the OECD average. Women constitute more than half of the public sector workforce in Italy, but they are slightly underreprepresented in public leadership roles compared to the OECD average.

The gender pay gap (GPG) remains stubbornly persistent stemming from longstanding structural inequalities, including the unequal division of paid and unpaid work. In Italy, 60% of the GPG is within firms as related to men and women with similar skills being in jobs with different responsibilities and tasks; 40% of the GPG is related to women being concentrated in low-pay firms and sectors (Chapter 16). Nevertheless, at 9% the GPG in Italy is below the OECD average (Figure 1). This is partly related to many women with limited earnings withdrawing from the labour market while higher-educated women remain in work. Addressing stereotypes that drive educational choices and expanding pay transparency tools could help narrow pay gaps in the future.

Figure 1. At 9%, the gender wage gap in Italy is below the OECD average

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



Note: Data refer to 2021, or except for Belgium, Chile, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Switzerland refer to 2020; for Ireland and Israel to 2019; and for Iceland, Slovenia and Türkiye to 2018.
Source: OECD Gender wage gap indicator, available at https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm. – [Figure 16.1].

Table 1. Summary indicators of gender equality

	Education			Employment & Entrepreneurship			Governance		
	Gender gap in mean PISA reading scores (boys–girls)	Gender gap in mean PISA mathematics scores (boys–girls)	Share of women among masters' graduates (%)	Gender gap in the labour force participation rate (men–women) (p.p.)	Share of women among managerial employment (%)	Share of women among self-employed with employees (%)	Share of women among parliamentary representatives (%)	Share of women among public sector employment (%)	Share of women among central government senior management (%)
ITALY	-25	16	58	18	29	25	32	58	34
OECD average	-29	6	58	11	34	25	34	58	37
Best female outcome	-52 (FIN)	-10 (ISL)	69 (ISL)	2 (LTU)	46 (LVA)	33 (NZL)	50 (MEX/NZL)	72 (SWE)	56 (LVA)
Worst female outcome	-10 (COL)	20 (COL)	35 (JPN)	40 (TUR)	13 (JPN)	12 (TUR)	10 (JPN)	25 (TUR)	4 (JPN)

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

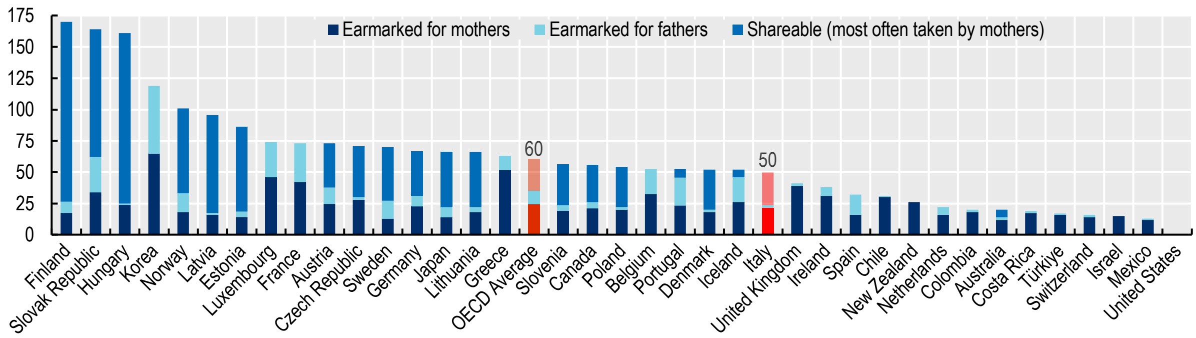
Much of the gender inequalities at home and at work emerge and widen once children arrive, as mothers are more likely than fathers to take leave, resign, or work fewer hours to look after children. Part-time is common among women in employment in Italy: 29.5% of them work less than 30 hours per week.

Many OECD countries aim to provide families with a continuum of supports during childhood, including paid parental leave for use by both parents and formal childcare supports. In Italy, childcare capacity is an issue, and just above one in four children aged 0-2 are enrolled in Early Childhood Education and Care. Acknowledging the need to strengthen childcare supply throughout the territory, Italy's Recovery and Resilience Plan foresees the creation of about 264 000 new childcare places (offering spaces to an additional 9% of all 0 to 6 year-olds).

Italy's parental leave system reserves 10 days of leave for fathers, while most of the available leave is either earmarked for mothers or "shareable" (Figure 2). As a result, mothers take most of the leave, therefore spending longer periods out of paid work compared to fathers (OECD Family Database). In order to incentivise more fathers to take leave and care for children, Italy should consider improving its parental leave system by introducing a "father quota" and/or by making sure that any "bonus months" are well-paid. Steps have been taken in this direction by increasing the allowance of the first month of optional parental leave from 30% to 80% of the salary.

Figure 2. Italy provides limited incentives to fathers to take parental leave

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



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

Contact

Willem ADEMA (✉ willem.adema@oecd.org)

Jonas FLUCHTMANN (✉ jonas.fluchtmann@oecd.org)

Valentina PATRINI (✉ valentina.patrini@oecd.org)