



Joining Forces for Gender Equality

WHAT IS HOLDING US BACK?

Country note: Japan



Joining Forces for Gender Equality analyses developments and policies for gender equality, 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. Attention to gender inequalities has extended 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; in times of ageing populations, low fertility and multiple crises, it will strengthen future gender-equal economic growth and social cohesion.

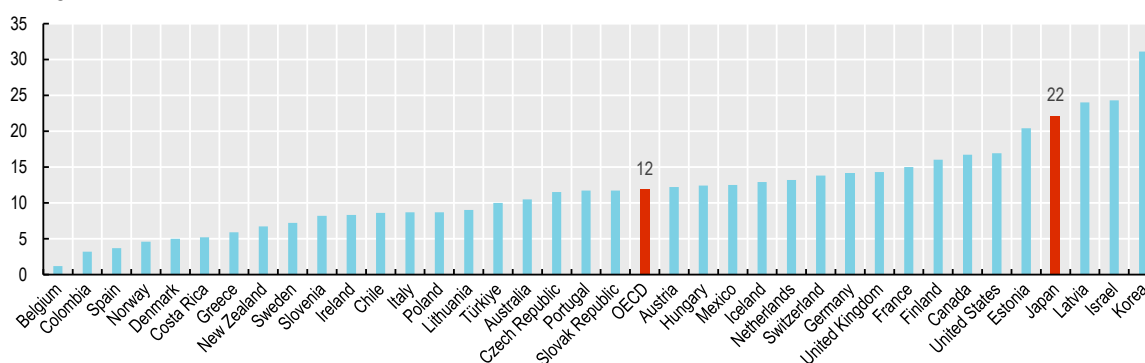
Gender equality in Japan

Gender equality is a long-standing challenge in Japan (Table 1). Gender gaps in the school performance of young women and men are smaller than the OECD average for reading, but larger for mathematics. Japan has the lowest share of women among masters' graduates in the OECD, the gender gap in labour force participation is larger than the OECD average, and many mothers work part-time (Chapter 13). The share of women among the self-employed with employees is also lower than the OECD average. While making up less than half of public sector employment, Japanese women have the lowest representation among public leadership positions in the OECD and the smallest share of seats the Diet. The same holds for the share of women among managers in the private sector.

The gender pay gap remains a stubbornly persistent challenge stemming from longstanding structural inequalities, such as an unequal division of paid and unpaid work, same skills but different jobs and responsibilities within firms, and occupational and sectoral segregation with an undervaluation of traditionally female-dominated jobs (Chapter 16). At about 22%, the gender pay gap for full-time earners in Japan is among the widest in the OECD (Figure 1). However, this gap has decreased by about 6 percentage points since 2010 – about twice as fast as across the whole OECD. A recent introduction of regular pay gap reporting for private companies could help further narrow the pay gap in future (Chapter 27).

Figure 1. At 22%, the Japanese gender wage gap is among the largest in the OECD

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].

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

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 (%)
JAPAN	-20	10	35	13	13	16	10	43	4
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/>.

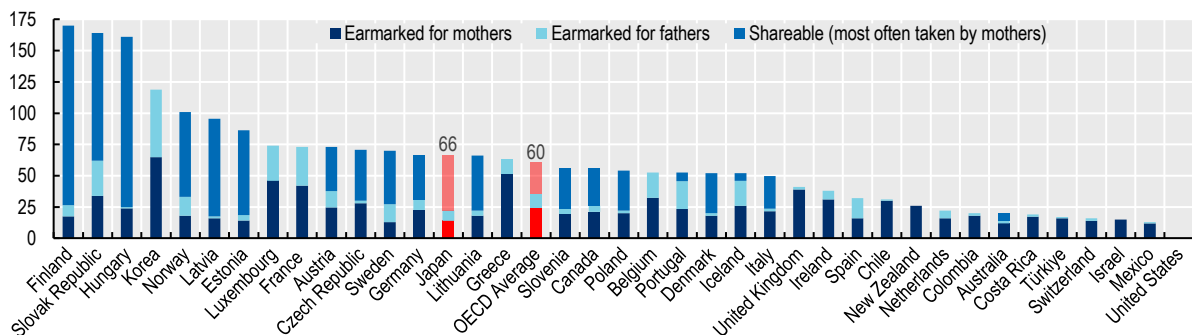
Much of the gender difference in pay – as well as many other gender inequalities on the labour market and at home – emerge and widen once children arrive (Chapter 16). Mothers tend to take longer leave of absence from work than fathers and sometimes only return to work part-time. This is particularly the case in Japan, where 39% of employed women work less than 30 hours per week (Chapter 13).

Following an increase in overall capacity by almost 50% compared to 2010, participation rates in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) systems in Japan are now above OECD average (Chapter 24). Japan introduced the right to free childcare for 3- to 5-year-olds in 2019, and measures are being implemented to further improve capacity and quality of the ECEC-system.

Japan is one of the OECD countries that provides strong incentives for fathers to use (at least some) parental leave, but paternal leave taking often remains stigmatised in the workplace. Mothers and fathers have an individual entitlement to parental leave of about one year, in addition to two bonus months if both parents take some of the leave (Figure 2). The use of parental leave by new fathers has increased from 1% in 2010 to 14% in 2021 (OECD Family Database). A new four-week paternity leave was introduced in October 2022. Employers should be encouraged to allow fathers to take leave in future and create more gender equal workplaces.

Figure 2. Japan has extensive leave entitlements for fathers

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, periods of parental leave that earmarked for fathers and mothers must be used simultaneously if both parents are to use the entirety of their entitlement. These periods are therefore included in the “shareable” portion here (see Figure 23.1). 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.patrin@oecd.org)