

1. Closing the implementation gap for gender equality

Closing persistent gender gaps in public and private spheres is an increasingly critical policy issue for OECD countries in their efforts to foster inclusive growth and opportunities for all. This chapter provides the rationale and the scope for the study. It also outlines the study's objectives and details the methodology adopted in preparing the report.

This report maps strategies, governance tools, institutional settings and innovative approaches used by governments across the OECD and throughout all state institutions (including legislatures and judiciaries) to drive and support the advancement of society-wide gender equality goals. It also identifies current challenges faced by OECD countries in ensuring long-lasting impacts of their gender equality agendas. Finally, the report provides key actionable policy messages to all state institutions, supported by examples of “what works” across the OECD.

This report was prepared by the OECD’s Public Governance Directorate (GOV) within the framework of the 2015 OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life* (hereafter the “2015 Recommendation”). It will serve as the basis for future monitoring of progress to the OECD Council in implementing the Recommendation. The monitoring report is scheduled for 2022. The 2015 Recommendation was developed under the auspices of the OECD Public Governance Committee, in co-operation with the OECD Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee. The 2015 Recommendation promotes a government-wide strategy for gender equality reform, sound mechanisms to ensure accountability and sustainability of gender initiatives, and tools and evidence to inform inclusive policy decisions. It also promotes a “whole-of-society” approach to reducing gender stereotypes, encouraging women to participate in politics, and removing implicit and explicit barriers to gender equality. This work builds on the work and expertise of the OECD Public Governance Committee and its policy communities (such as the Public Employment and Management Network and the Working Party of Senior Budget Officials), including the 2014 report *Women, Government and Policy-Making in OECD Countries: Fostering Diversity for Inclusive Growth*, and the Global OECD Roundtables on Better Governance for Gender Equality. The 2015 Recommendation complements and deepens the relevant provisions of the 2013 *OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship*. Both of these Council Recommendations were developed as critical aspects of the OECD Gender Initiative.

1.1. Rationale for the report

Gender inequality continues to persist across the OECD, although to varying degrees, in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life and hinders inclusive growth and opportunities for all. In addition, movements around the world such as #metoo, Time’s Up, the Weinstein Effect and #BalanceTonPorc increasingly demand accountability for the persistent gender inequality in public and private spheres.

While women’s labour force participation rates have been improving over the past few decades, progress remains slow and patchy and the glass ceiling persists. Overall, women are still less likely than men to be in the workforce across the OECD although their educational attainment tends to be higher. Equal access to quality and senior jobs and levels of pay remains uneven. Women still hold the majority of part-time jobs and work for lower pay. Important strides have been made in recent years towards enhancing pay transparency; such efforts are slowly bearing fruit. Yet on average, gender pay gaps across the OECD remain at about 15% at the median, with little progression recorded in recent years (OECD, 2017^[1]).

Within the public administration, women continue to be over-represented in both low-level job categories (e.g. secretarial positions) and part-time work (75% of total part-time workers in the public sector in participating OECD countries). The higher the position, the lower the proportion of women in many OECD countries across all branches of power. In the legislatures and senior roles in the public service, there has only been a marginal

increase (around 2%) since 2012. Women continue to represent, on average, only one-third of senior public service employees, members of parliament (including in chair positions of committees) and Supreme Court judges.

The sluggish progress reveals that many of the government initiatives to date have not always been up to the task of dealing with persisting stereotypes and cultural norms. By way of example, women remain disproportionately responsible for unpaid care work, with major potential to improve public, accessible and affordable child and/or elderly care. Although women are often at the losing end of structural gender inequality, cultural norms and stereotypes are simultaneously creating pressure and subsequent problems for men and boys, such as underdiagnosed mental health problems, addiction and alcohol abuse, and use of violence as a masculinity norm.

In addition, new challenges arise: while presenting real opportunities for change, digitalisation, disruptive technologies and big data generate additional risks to expand the scale of persisting inequalities, and create new forms of divides. Increasing incidences of digital violence, abuse and harassment in the form of (online) sexual harassment and gender-based violence is a staggering example. This may also generate a risk of democratic deficit as women may become intimidated to participate in public debate to avoid such violence. As a response, G7 countries have already made a political commitment to end gender-based violence, abuse and harassment in digital contexts.¹

Accordingly, the OECD Ministerial Council welcomed the 2017 “Report on the implementation of the OECD Gender Recommendations”, and recognised that progress in closing gender gaps has been very slow, and that gender gaps have even widened in some countries. Ministers also recognised that the slow pace of progress called for urgent action and a more strategic approach to closing the remaining gaps, including through structural reforms. As such, the OECD Ministerial Council committed to reinforce its efforts, including by adopting comprehensive plans and measures to mainstream and improve gender equality in line with the OECD Gender Recommendations. It also called on the OECD to continue its work in this regard. It is scheduled to issue a monitoring report to the OECD Council in 2022 for the progress made in the implementation of OECD Gender Recommendations.

Effective governance is key to delivering gender equality results. Meaningful changes on the ground require a co-ordinated, competent and powerful whole-of-government commitment, and clear and effective mechanisms in place within and across government institutions to be able to translate public policies, programmes, services and budgets into concrete benefits for men and women. All institutions and policy areas count for gender equality as they all impact men and women, and yet in a different way due to their different circumstances. This is why gender mainstreaming is a fundamental commitment of countries that aspire to eliminate gender-based discrimination across the board and realise a fully inclusive society. In addition, ensuring gender balance in public decision making has been increasingly highlighted by OECD countries as a key governance issue related to fairness, transparency and inclusive policy outcomes.

1.2. Objectives of the report

This report aims to advance reflection on the following elements by drawing on key examples around the OECD on what works:

- What are the public governance implications for countries to make progress in gender equality? (Chapters 2 and 3)

- What kind of accountability mechanisms are in place? Where are the gaps? (Chapters 2 and 6)
- How can governments harness the full potential of their tools to advance gender equality goals? (Chapter 3)
- Which policies, initiatives and innovative approaches are effective in shifting the organisational culture towards gender equality and inclusiveness? (Chapter 4)
- How do public administrations, judiciaries and parliaments promote gender equality? Where are the gaps in access to leadership in public institutions? (Chapters 4, 5 and 6)

1.3. Methodology and content

The information in this report was primarily gathered through surveys disseminated to a wide range of participants including: government officials, judicial councils (or equivalents), parliamentary secretariats and national gender equality institutions. As the report builds on the available information, absence of references to certain OECD countries throughout this report should not be interpreted that such frameworks are not in place. The report is based on the following surveys of OECD countries:

- 2017 OECD Survey on National Gender Equality Frameworks and Public Policies (17 respondent countries): The survey was addressed to the representatives of national gender equality institutions (or equivalents) who are also members of the OECD Roundtable on Better Governance for Gender Equality. The survey focused, among others, on the legal frameworks and whole-of-government strategic planning for gender equality and gender mainstreaming; policy frameworks; assessments of needs and gaps; institutional set-ups and public governance approaches to implement gender equality policy; gender mainstreaming tools; and accountability mechanisms for gender equality. Sub-sections of this survey were also sent to pilot line ministries across OECD countries to assess the degree of implementation of gender mainstreaming requirements.
- 2017 OECD Survey on Gender Equality in Civil Service Employment (20 respondent countries): The survey, which focused on the central civil service, was addressed to the Public Employment and Management Network. This survey provided a detailed account of how countries equipped themselves to ensure gender-balanced and gender-sensitive public administrations and their efforts to achieve gender equality results more broadly. The areas of focus included gender-sensitive people management; reconciliation of professional and personal life in the civil service; leadership and executive accountability for promoting gender equality in the civil service; addressing the gender wage gap and occupational segregation; and representation of women and men in the civil service.
- 2016 OECD Survey on Gender-Sensitive Practices in the Judiciary (19 respondent countries). This survey was addressed to judicial councils (or equivalent institutions) across the OECD. It focused on the gender composition of the judiciary; work-life balance practices; barriers for women's access to judicial appointments; and gender-sensitive decision making. It aimed to complement the work carried out by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) and its 2016 and 2018 reports "European judicial systems: Efficiency and quality of justice". These CEPEJ reports have also served as useful resources in the completion of this assessment.

- 2016 OECD Survey on Gender Sensitive Electoral and Legislative Practices (22 respondent countries): This survey was addressed to the presidents of parliaments across the OECD as well as parliamentary secretariats. It focused on gender equality frameworks in the parliament; gender mainstreaming mechanisms; gender equality oversight; and challenges to implementing gender equality in the work of the parliaments.
- The report also draws on, as relevant, the results of the 2016 OECD Survey of Gender Budgeting Practices managed by the Working Party of Senior Budget Officials, and on Indicators of Regulatory Governance managed by the OECD Regulatory Policy Committee.

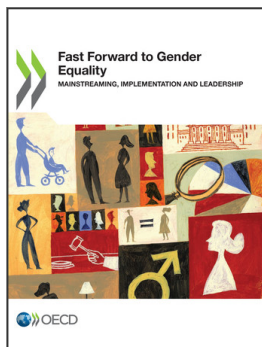
The report also reflects the outcomes of the discussions of the OECD Roundtables on Better Governance for Gender Equality, and meetings of OECD Gender Budgeting Experts. It also builds on the policy dialogue advanced through a broad range of policy forums such as the Women Political Leaders Global Summits, OECD Equal Access to Justice Roundtables and various OECD events.

A fresh innovation in this report concerns an initial mapping of inclusive governance tools (e.g. budget, regulations and procurement). Despite the great potential of such tools to improve the inclusiveness of decision-making processes, they often remain underused across the OECD. This report also emphasises the value of behavioural insights in responding to underlying norms and attitudes that deeply influence gender equality in the workplace, as well as providing tools to narrow the gender gap, support women's public service leaderships, and assist in identifying the potential unintended outcomes of well-intentioned policies and gender reforms.

The report is structured as follows. On the basis of good practices across OECD countries and policy recommendations, Chapter 2 reviews government strategies and institutional frameworks for effective gender mainstreaming. It looks through robust accountability for gender equality and assesses the collection of sound evidence of policy impacts on women and men. Chapter 3 puts the spotlight on gender mainstreaming in budgeting, the regulatory cycle and procurement frameworks. Chapter 4 explores gender equality, diversity and anti-harassment in the public service through the practical analysis of gender-sensitive people management and the use of insights from behavioural sciences. It accounts for trends in public sector employment of women and highlights policy measures implemented in OECD countries to help achieve parity in the public sector. Chapter 5 examines the status of gender-sensitive practices in the judiciary while pointing out the pitfalls to gender equality in this sector. Chapter 6 lays a special focus on women's access to politics and the development of gender-sensitive legislatures, zeroing in on persisting barriers to women running for elected office or holding seats in parliament and on key initiatives for promoting equal access to leadership.

Note

1. See Charlevoix Commitment to End Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, Abuse and Harassment in Digital Contexts.



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