

Executive summary

Over the past decades, gender equality in Chile has advanced along several important dimensions. Educational attainments have significantly improved from one age group to the next for both men and women and today, young women out-perform young men in terms of educational outcomes. The share of tertiary graduates is higher among young women than among young men, with slightly higher returns to education for women.

Notwithstanding these achievements, fundamental social and economic gender gaps persist. The traditional male breadwinner *vis-a-vis* female homemaker divide is still common in Chile, meaning that women typically spend more hours looking after children and doing housework. As a result, the combined paid and unpaid working hours of employed women exceeds that of employed men by 12 additional hours of weekly work. Even if women expanded their work outside of the home, they would likely continue doing many tasks commonly perceived as ‘women’s work’, given existing attitudes and stereotypes.

The unequal partition of working hours and tasks affects women and men’s economic success. The female employment rate in Chile is almost 20 percentage points lower than the male rate, a gap much wider than the average of the OECD countries. Motherhood has a strong impact and, although mothers of young children generally only withdraw temporarily from the labour market, they will more likely work part-time or informally when they return.

When women do work in Chile, they earn significantly less than men do. The proportion of women who earn a low-income is about 1.6 times as high as that of men in Chile and women are less likely to advance to management. While many young women now obtain more years of schooling than young men do, girls are much less likely to study in the lucrative science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light pre-existing challenges in an unprecedented way. Four-fifths of all Chilean women who stopped working during the pandemic did not search for re-employment. Eventually, this massive fallout on labour market inactivity reflects the fact that many women took on even more caring work. It has sparked stress and mental health problems and an upsurge of episodes of violence against women.

The OECD review of *Gender Equality in Chile* puts forward a comprehensive policy strategy for tackling gender inequalities. First, it calls for the provision of sound policies that aim at reducing the barriers that stand in the way of a more equal allocation of time and responsibilities between men and women. Second, it argues that there is room for increasing the participation of women in the labour market by ensuring that women’s paid work pays more. Finally, it looks at how the COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered the extent of pre-existing challenges.

Main recommendations for reducing barriers to sharing paid and unpaid work more equitably:

- Create a more comprehensive care system by expanding formal early childhood education and after-school care and by investing in long-term care.

- Expand parental leave by establishing reserved paternity leave weeks as part of parental leave. At the same time, increasing the coverage of maternity and paternity benefits requires the back-up of broader policies to foster formalisation.
- Strengthen flexible work options by allowing for more adaptable starting times and teleworking to reduce the time crunch experienced by parents due to long working hours, commutes and family obligations.
- Continue the efforts to reduce the transmission of gender stereotypes in education both through training to help teachers become more mindful about gender attitudes and stereotypes, and engage the families in the process of creating gender-sensitive education.

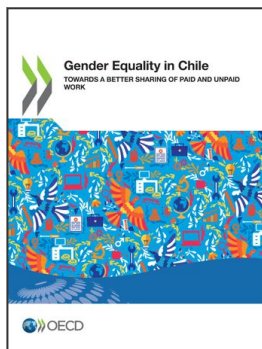
Main recommendations for making women's paid work pay more:

- Ensure access to quality education for all by providing additional support to vulnerable girls and teenage mothers and by rewarding and communicating the benefits of completing studies.
- Keep on with the effort to promote women in leadership positions by strengthening women's representation at the executive level, particularly in private sector companies. This should be enhanced by stepping up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of equal opportunities and equal pay for equivalent work.
- Step up efforts to encourage girls' interest in non-traditional careers such as science, technology and mathematics (STEM), including with the support of mentorship programmes and more efforts to disseminate positive role models.
- Support female entrepreneurship by revamping the reform of the marital law. This requires the abolition of the default rule, which, by foreseeing that the husband administers the marital property, reduces the wife's capacity to raise collateral.
- Fight violence against women by lowering the barriers that prevent the victims of violence and harassment to access the justice system, while at the same time encouraging and guaranteeing safe complaint processes for victims.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Facilitate access of low-income households – in particular single parents, who are predominantly female – to benefits, as well as to social security programmes, which support families as a whole and allow women return to formal employment.
- Prevent women's activity and exclusion from the formal workforce from increasing further by actively informing firms about how to reduce working hours and allow flexible work options, provide relief for working parents, and manage redundancy payments related to temporary lay-offs and sick leave.
- Step up access to emergency measures to self-employed women, especially those who do not qualify for employment insurance.
- Continue the efforts to push back on social acceptance of domestic violence by drawing attention to how the issue affects women and children in confinement. The actions to foster the introduction of electronically-based modes of communication to seek help and report abuse should be complemented by measures to ensure that service delivery for victims is accessible and integrated across the country and relevant spheres.

The above economic and social policy measures must be embedded in a broader effort to mainstream gender in governments' responses to the COVID-19 crisis. In the short run, this means, wherever possible, applying a gender lens to emergency policy measures. In the longer run, it means government having in place a well-functioning system of gender mainstreaming, relying on ready access to gender-disaggregated evidence in all sectors so that differential effects on women and men can be readily assessed.



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