International gender equality statistics

To better understand gender equality in Australia, it is important to consider Australia’s position within a global context. This fact sheet presents statistics on gender diversity in economic security, education, leadership and care work in 28 countries. These comparative statistics highlight that gender inequality is a global phenomenon.

It should be noted that comparability can be complicated as countries measure gender equality differently, and not all data points are available for each country.¹ Most data is sourced for the latest available years from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank. Where data was missing, this was supplemented from other research agencies, such as Catalyst, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA or Agency).

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¹ Figures provided are reflective of the most available time period.
Economic security

The following section outlines a series of measures that frame the workforce in an international context, including the gender pay gap, workforce participation, and workforce participation compared to board representation.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is the difference between women’s and men’s average weekly full-time equivalent earnings, expressed as a percentage of men’s earnings. The gender pay gap is influenced by a number of interrelated work, family and societal factors, including stereotypes about the work women and men ‘should’ do, and the way women and men ‘should’ engage in the workforce. Other factors that contribute to the gender pay gap include:

- Women and men working in different industries (industrial segregation) and different jobs (occupational segregation). Historically, female-dominated industries and jobs have attracted lower wages than male-dominated industries and jobs.
- A lack of women in senior positions, and a lack of part-time or flexible senior roles. Women are more likely than men to work part-time or flexibly because they still undertake most of society’s unpaid caring work and may find it difficult to access senior roles.
- Women’s more precarious attachment to the workforce (largely due to their unpaid caring responsibilities).
- Differences in education, work experience and seniority.
- Discrimination, both direct and indirect.

Figure 1 displays the gender pay gap by the 22 available countries. Results are ordered from the largest gender pay gap to the smallest gender pay gap.

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Of the 22 countries listed by the OECD (2013/2014):

- There is a gender pay gap favouring men in every country.
- Only five countries have gender pay gaps below 10%: Denmark; Norway; Belgium; New Zealand; and Hungary.
- Three countries have gender pay gaps that exceed 20%: Korea; Japan; and Finland.
- Australia ranks 16th, with a gender pay gap of 18.0% (based on 2014 results; Figure 1).
- Note that the current national gender pay gap for Australia is 17.3% (November 2015), while the Agency’s gender pay gap for non-public sector employers with 100 or more staff is 24.0% (2015).

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Workforce participation

Workforce participation is the proportion of people who are employed or actively seeking employment.\(^{12}\) It takes the number of women or men actively involved in the workforce, and expresses them as a percentage of the population of women or men, respectively. The following section covers women and men aged between 15 and 64 years.

Figure 2 displays men’s and women’s participation rates for available countries. Men’s participation rates are displayed on the left side in grey, while women’s participation rates are displayed on the right side in yellow. Results are ordered from the highest participation rate for women to the lowest participation rate for women.


Results based on a comparison of OECD countries reveal:

- The overall OECD participation rate for women is 67.2%.
- Australia’s participation rates for both women (70.5%) and men (82.2%) are slightly above the average of all OECD countries.
- The highest participation rate for women is in Iceland (84.2%), followed by Sweden (79.3%) and Switzerland (79.0%).
- The lowest participation rate for women is in Turkey (33.6%), followed by Mexico (46.8%), and Italy (55.2%).

Women’s workforce participation and board representation

Figure 3 combines women’s workforce participate rates and women’s share of board positions (boards of publicly listed companies) to see if there is a relationship between these two measures.

Note that countries displayed in Figure 3 had the two gender equality indicators available. The vertical axis represents women’s workforce participation rates for each country. The horizontal axis represents women’s share of board positions for each country.

Figure 3: Workforce participation of women and board representation of women (available data)

Figure 3 shows that:

- There is a possible link between women’s workforce participation and women’s board representation.
- For example, some of the countries with the highest representation of women on boards have the highest participation rates for women overall (e.g. Iceland).
- Likewise, some of the countries with the lowest representations of women on boards have the lowest participation rates for women (e.g. Mexico).

However, while Australia has a relatively high participation rate for women (70.5%), it has a fairly low percentage of women serving on boards (12.3%; Figure 3).

**Leadership**

This section explores gender comparisons in leadership across a range of countries. These measures include a comparison of women’s workforce participation, the representation of management roles in the workforce, and gender composition of parliamentary seats.

**Gender composition of boards**

Gender composition refers to women’s and men’s share of positions. The gender composition of boards is calculated by taking the number of women or men on a given board and expressing that as a percentage of the total number of board positions.

Figure 4 displays the gender composition of the boards of publicly listed companies for available countries. Women’s percentage of board positions are displayed on the left side in yellow, and men’s percentage of board positions are displayed on the right side in grey. Results are ordered from the lowest percentage of women on boards to the highest percentage of women on boards.

Based on the gender composition of boards across an international comparison:

- Men hold the majority of board positions across all countries.
- Women account for only one in five board members in Australia (19%). However, WGEA results show that women hold nearly one in four (23.6%) board positions in non-public sector organisations with 100 or more employees.  

- Only Iceland appears to have achieved equitable representation of women and men on boards (44% women compared to 56% men; Figure 4).

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Figure 4: Gender composition of boards on the largest publicly listed companies (available data)


Note: As of 2012, however, Icelandic companies were required to have 40% gender representation by September 2013.

* Based on 2014 results. All other data reflects 2015 results.
Proportion of female and male employees who are managers

The proportion of female and male employees who are managers is calculated by taking the number of female managers or male managers\(^{14}\) and expressing this as a percentage of all female or all male employees.

Figure 5 displays the percentages of employed women and men that hold managerial roles. The percentages of male employees who are managers are displayed on the left side in grey, and the percentages of female employees who are managers are displayed on the right side in yellow. Results are ordered from the highest percentage of female employees who are managers, to the lowest percentage of female employees who are managers.

Figure 5: Proportion of female and male employees who are managers (available data)

![Bar chart showing the proportion of female and male employees who are managers for various countries.](chart)


\(^{14}\) Managers plan, direct, coordinate and evaluate the overall activities of enterprises, governments and other organizations, or of organizational units within them, and formulate and review their policies, laws, rules and regulations. International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco08/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco08/index.htm)
Based on the proportions of working women and working men that hold manager positions:

- There are a higher proportion of working men holding managerial positions than working women across all available countries.
- Australia has the highest proportion of female employees that are managers (8.9%), and the second-highest proportion of male employees that are managers (13.3%).
- Korea has the lowest proportion of female managers (0.4%) and male managers (2.4%; Figure 5).

**Proportion of parliamentary seats held by women**

The proportion of parliamentary seats held by women is calculated by taking the number of women that hold parliamentary seats and expressing them as a percentage of total parliamentary seats.

Figure 6 displays the percentages of parliamentary seats held by women in available countries. Results are ordered from the highest representation of women in parliamentary seats to the lowest representation of women in parliamentary seats.

**Figure 6: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (available data)**

A comparison of women’s representation in parliamentary seats shows that:

- Men hold the majority of parliamentary seats in all countries.
- The average representation of women in parliamentary seats across OECD countries is 28.6%.
- Australia is just below the average, with women holding over a quarter (26.7%) of parliamentary seats.
- Just five countries have reached gender equality (40:40:20) with parliamentary seat representation: Sweden; Mexico; Finland; Iceland; and Spain.
- The highest representation of women is in Sweden, where women hold over two in five seats (43.6%; Figure 6).

**Unpaid care work**

The following section explores the time that women and men devote to unpaid care work. Unpaid care work includes activities undertaken that provide necessary health, well-being, maintenance, and protection of someone. The individuals performing these activities are not remunerated.\(^{15}\)

**Unpaid care work gender ratio**

Figure 7 displays the unpaid care work gender ratio, calculated by taking the average number of hours that women devote to unpaid care work and dividing this by the average number of hours that men devote to unpaid care work. For example, a ratio of 1 would indicate an equal amount of unpaid care work is performed by women and men, but a ratio of more than 1 indicates that, on average, women commit more time to unpaid care work than men. Results are ordered from the largest ratio to the smallest ratio.

A comparison of unpaid care work between women and men, expressed as a ratio, shows:

- Women commit more time to unpaid care work than men across all available countries.
- For every one hour that Australian men commit to unpaid care work, Australian women commit one hour and 48 minutes.
- The country with the greatest gender disparity in time is Turkey, where women commit over six hours for every one hour that men commit to unpaid care work.
- Denmark is the most balanced in the time undertaken in unpaid care work, with women devoting one hour and 18 minutes for every one hour that men engage in unpaid care work (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Ratio of time women spend devoted to unpaid care work, compared to men (available data)

Educational attainment

This section explores the level of education attained by women and men. Educational attainment is defined as the highest level of education an individual has successfully completed and is expressed as a percentage of the population.

Bachelor degree attainment rates

Figure 8 displays the rates at which women and men achieve a bachelor degree or equivalent in available countries.

The attainment rates of men are displayed on the left side in grey, and the attainment rates of women are displayed on the right side in yellow. Results are ordered from the highest percentage of women attaining a bachelor degree or equivalent, to the lowest percentage of women attaining a bachelor degree or equivalent.

A comparison of women and men’s educational attainment rates by country reveals:

→ For 26 of the 34 OECD countries women have higher attainment rates of bachelor degrees than men.
→ Australia ranks 4th overall for women’s and men’s educational attainment rates. Women have a slightly greater rate of attaining a bachelor degree or equivalent than men (26.1% compared to 21.4%).
→ Japan has the largest disparity in the attainment rates of women and men, with 18.5% of women attaining a bachelor degree or equivalent compared to 36.7% of men (Figure 8).
Figure 8: Educational attainment of women and men aged 25-64 years, bachelor degree or equivalent (available data)


* Korea, Japan and Mexico masters and doctoral attainment categories combined under bachelor.