



# Women at Work in G20 countries: Progress and policy action

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## Executive summary

### ***Further progress made towards meeting the G20 25x25 gender goal but not all countries are on track***

In 2018, further progress occurred in most G20 economies towards meeting the G20 gender goal of reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 percent by 2025. Since 2012, there has been a decline in the gender gap in participation in almost all G20 economies for which recent data are available, with the exception of Russia. Around half of G20 members are on track to meet the 2025 goal in the sense that the actual decline in the gender gap in these countries has been in line with, or better than, the decline needed each year to achieve the goal, assuming a linear reduction. Particularly large reductions occurred in Japan, Argentina, Brazil and Korea. However, in some countries where the gender gap is particularly large, achieving the goal remains challenging, notably in Mexico and Saudi Arabia.

### ***A more mixed picture emerges for closing gender gaps in other labour market outcomes***

The gender pay gap remains substantial in most G20 economies, with only very modest progress in closing this gap. This is reflected in persistently large gender gaps in the incidence of low-paid work, access to managerial jobs and the incidence of part-time work. Greater opportunities for women to obtain better quality jobs would allow for a better work-life balance and improved well-being and economic security. Moreover, this would enhance incentives for women to participate in the labour market and reduce the underutilisation of their skills.

### ***A range of policy action is being taken to foster greater gender equality in the labour market***

Last year's report noted increased attention towards measures aimed at supporting women through work transitions, in particular returning to work after maternity. This year, G20 countries are converging in promoting better family leave policies and work-life balance.

Reinvigorated efforts are also noticeable in the context of tackling gender-based discrimination, including pregnancy and maternity status, and violence and harassment in the world of work.

Increasing digitalisation, a shift towards greening economies and the growing demand for care services are some of the factors that are likely to drive employment growth in the future. However, despite a number of initiatives to address gender segregation by occupation, it remains a feature common of all G20 countries. Women are over-represented in the care sectors, while men are found in larger numbers in the STEM fields.

### ***Further action is required***

Considerable policy action has occurred in G20 countries to boost women's participation in the labour market and reduce gender gaps in job quality. Nevertheless, G20 members and stakeholders may wish to consider further action in the following areas:

- ***Strengthening long-term care and care leave provision.*** Women continue to take on a disproportionate burden of long-term care work and this may become an increasingly important limitation on their participation in paid work. Therefore, long-term care provision needs to be strengthened as well as access to care leave for both women and men.

- ***Changing stereotypes and norms around caregiving and housework.*** This is crucial but challenging. Governments should apply a range of measures and tools, including awareness campaigns, to reduce bias against male caregiving and highlight women workers' significant contribution to family income and national GDP, thereby promoting gender-equitable sharing of unpaid work.
- ***Ensuring non-standard forms of employment do not weaken employment rights.*** Fostering self-employment and other more flexible forms of employment such as platform work can provide useful labour market opportunities for women and a better work-life balance but should not come at the cost of weaker protection against discrimination or other employment and social protection rights. The risk of using non-standard forms of employment to circumvent anti-discrimination requirements and maternity (and paternity) protection legislation should be further explored.
- ***Tackling gender segregation by occupation.*** Further efforts should be made to foster a more mixed labour force, to provide equal opportunities for women and men to take advantage of the employment opportunities in the expanding digital, green and caring sectors. Additional efforts are needed to address the persisting gender pay gap and enable more women to reach leadership positions.
- ***Improving the evidence base on gender gaps in the labour market.*** In all countries, further improvements in the availability of timely and comparable data are required to monitor closely how gender gaps in the labour market are evolving and the effectiveness of policy interventions. More detailed country reporting on strategies for improving female participation and quality of work, and better data regarding gender equality in corporations, would contribute to a better understanding and assessment of progress.

## 1. Introduction

At the 2014 Summit in Brisbane, G20 leaders committed to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 per cent by the year 2025 compared to 2012 (the 25x25 goal). G20 Ministers of Labour further agreed on a set of key principles to improve the quality of women's employment. At the request of the Japanese Presidency of the G20, the ILO and the OECD have prepared this paper to assess progress in reducing gender gaps in the labour market and recent policy development as reported by G20 countries using the template agreed upon during the Turkish presidency in 2015.<sup>1</sup> This paper is intended to inform G20 Leaders regarding the status of gender equality indicators in their countries, in the context of the Brisbane goal. It is also intended to promote greater gender equality by pointing to the key challenges for closing gender gaps in the labour market and identifying promising policy measures that can accelerate efforts towards the achievement of the Brisbane goal and commitments.

## 2. Recent developments in reducing gender gaps in the labour market

### *Taking stock of the Brisbane goal*

In all G20 economies for which recent data are available, there was an increase in the labour force participation rate of women aged 15-64 between 2012 and 2018.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, there remain large country differences in the participation of women and, consequently, in the gender gap in participation (Figure 1). As a result of rising female participation rates, and either smaller rises in male rates or even declines, ***there has been a decline in the gender gap in participation in almost all G20 economies*** for which data are available with the exception of Russia (Figure 2).<sup>3</sup>

***In around half of G20 members, the decline in the gender gap is in line with, or better than, the expected progress towards meeting the 2025 goal of a 25% reduction in the gender gap*** in each country from its value in 2012. In other words, the actual decline in the gender gap between 2012 and 2018 has been around the same or greater than what would be expected assuming a linear decline in the gap each year to reach the 2025 goal. Among this group of countries, particularly large reductions occurred in Japan, Argentina, Brazil and Korea. The actual decline was also noticeably greater than the expected decline in Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany. Of the G20 economies where the decline in the gap was less than expected, there was, nevertheless, a sizeable reduction in Indonesia and Turkey. Of more concern is the situation in Mexico and Saudi Arabia where there has been little progress towards reducing a sizeable gender gap in participation.<sup>4</sup>

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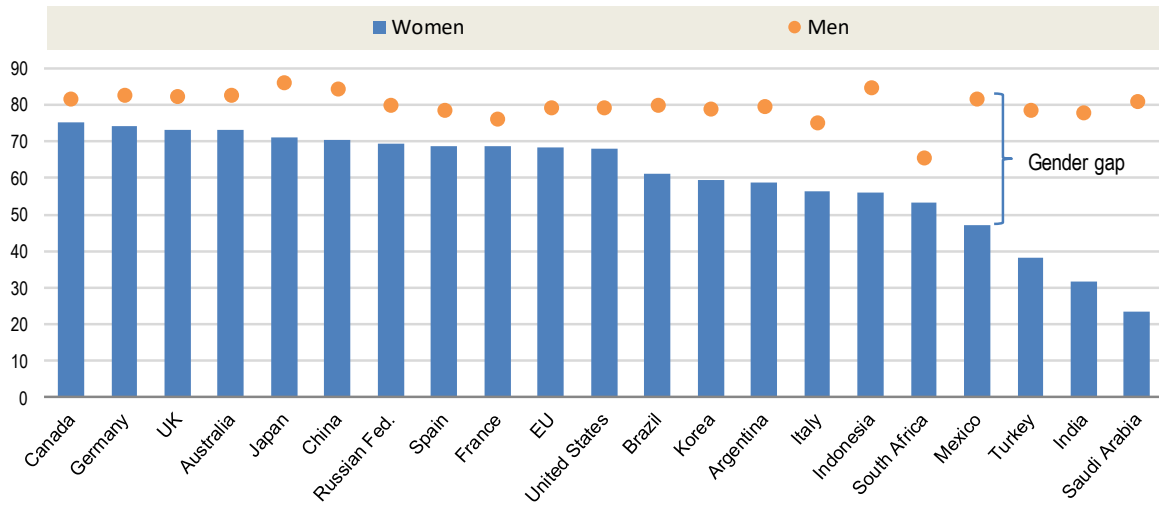
<sup>1</sup> Under the German presidency of the G20, it was agreed by G20 countries to report separately on gender. This paper summarises the information on recent policy developments submitted by the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, and United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> Recent labour force data is not available for China or India.

<sup>3</sup> Participation rates rose for women in Russia but by even more for men.

<sup>4</sup> In Saudi Arabia, non-Saudi residents account for a considerable proportion of the workforce. With respect to Saudi nationals only, greater progress has been made in reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 2.3 percentage points between 2012 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2018, although the gap remains large at 45.7 percentage points.

**Figure 1. Labour force participation rate by gender, 2018**  
Share of the population aged 15-64 participating in the labour force (%)

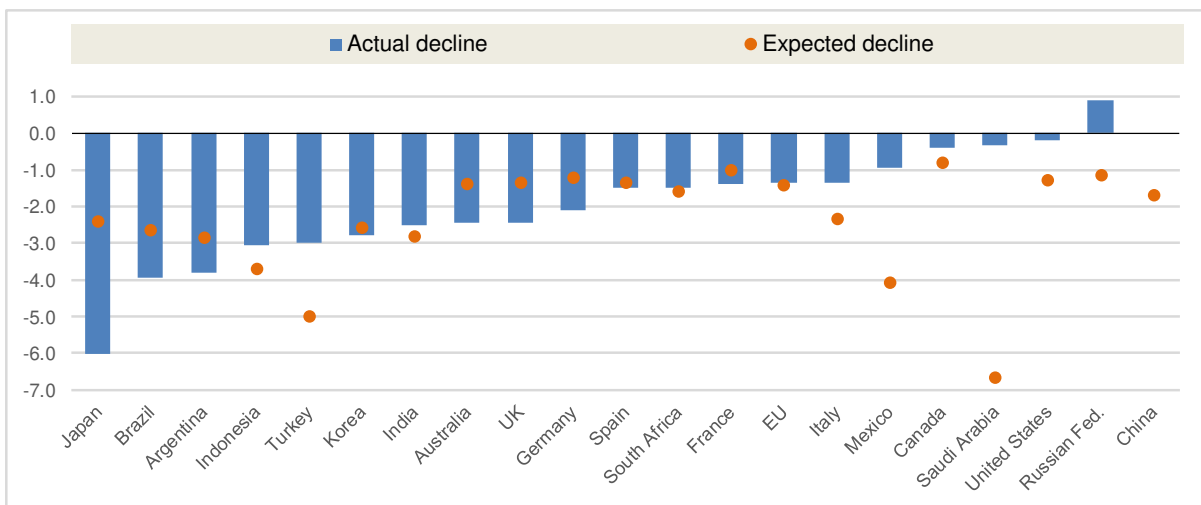


Note: The data refer to: 2010 for China and 2015 for India; and the population aged 15 and over for India and 16-64 for the United States.

Source: OECD calculations based on national labour force surveys and, for China, census data.

**Figure 2. Actual versus expected decline in the gender gap in participation, 2012-2018**

Percentage points



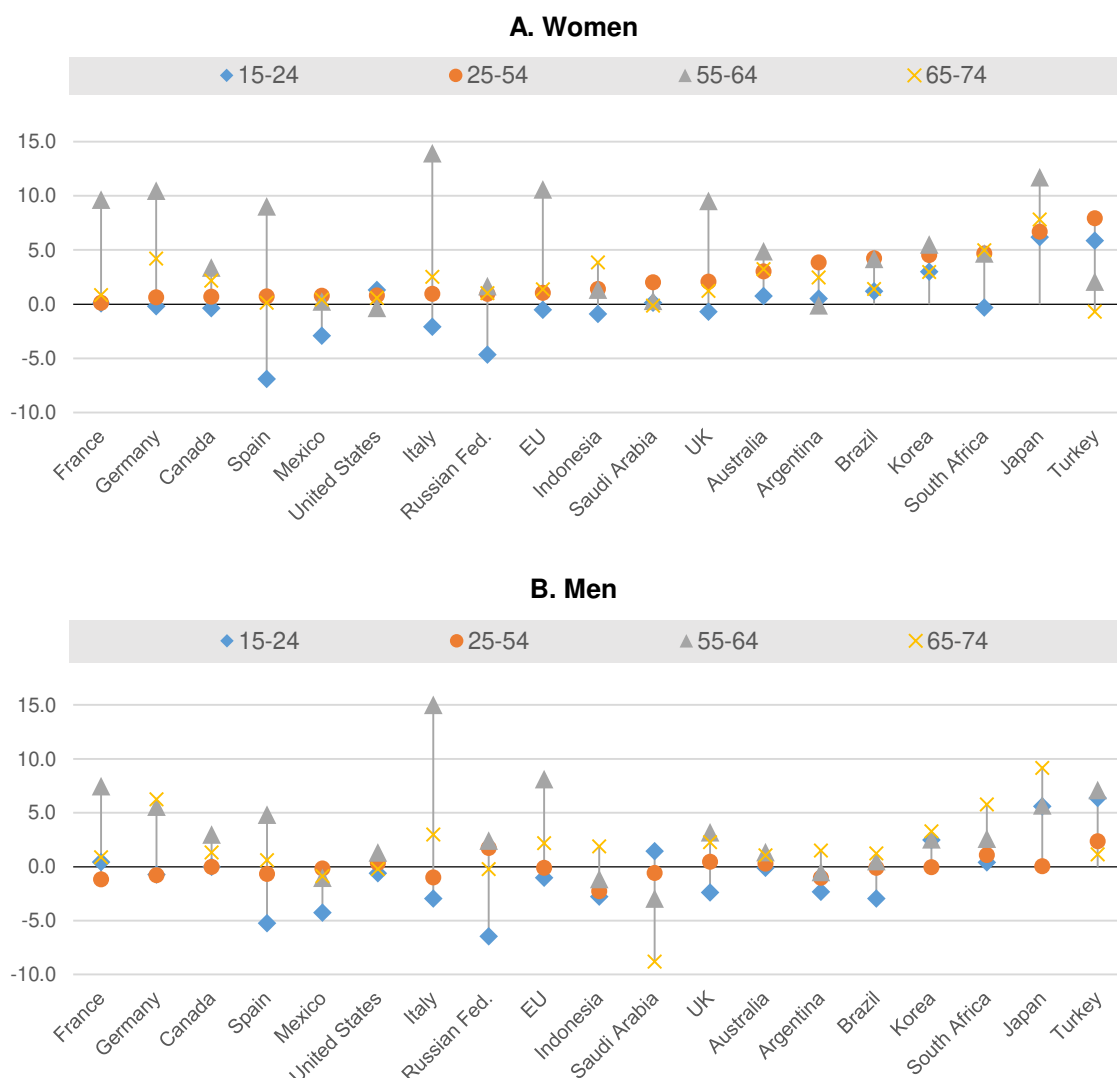
Note: The actual decline refers to the observed change in the gender gap between 2012 and 2018 (2015 for India). The expected decline refers to the decline that would occur by 2018 (2015 for India) if there was a linear decline in the gender gap from 2012 onwards to reach the goal of a 25% decline in the gap by 2025. For China, no recent data are available to calculate the actual decline in the gender gap and the data for 2012 have been projected to calculate the expected decline in the gender gap. The data refer to the population aged 15 and over for India and 16-64 for the United States.

Source: OECD calculations based on national labour force surveys and, for China, census data.

The narrowing of the gender gap in participation has not been driven by declines in participation rates of men. Participation rates for prime-age women have risen between 2012 and 2018 in all G20 economies for which recent data are available (Figure 3, Panel A). In contrast, participation rates for prime-age men changed little over the period in most countries (Panel B). Participation rates for both young women and men fell in a number of countries, but this partly reflected rising retention rates in education. In several countries, the participation of older people (aged 55-64) rose strongly for both women and men (though by slightly more for women in general). This reflected the rising level of

education of older people as well as policy action to raise the official retirement age and encourage later retirement. The rise for older people was particularly large in Italy.

**Figure 3. Change in participation rates by gender and age, 2012-2018**  
Percentage points



Note: The data for the age group 65-74 refer to the age group 65+ for Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

Source: OECD calculations based on national labour force surveys.

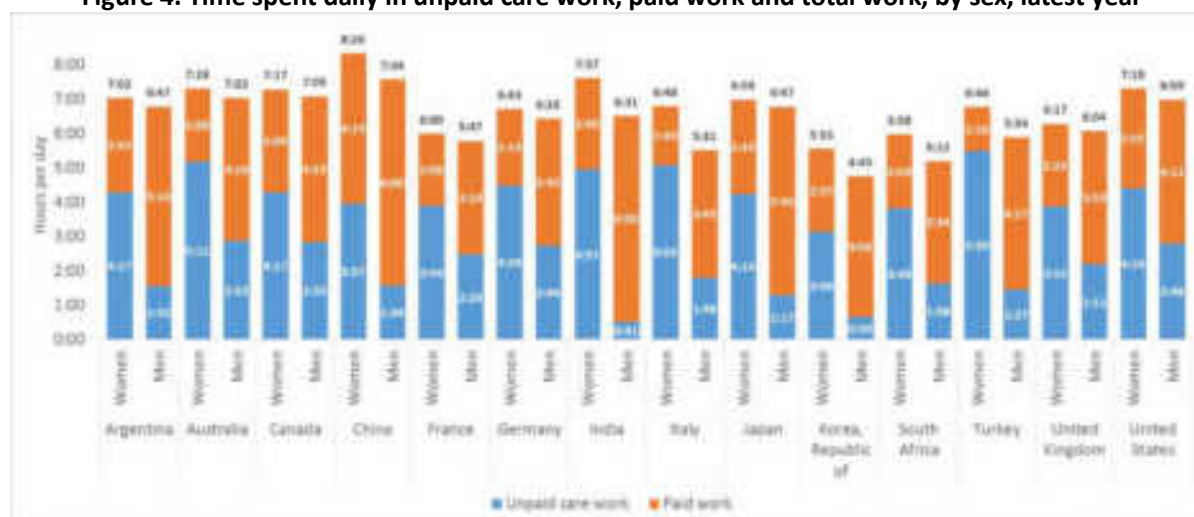
***Making further progress in reducing gender gaps in participation will require reducing the gender imbalance in the time devoted to unpaid care work***<sup>5</sup>

Traditionally, women have been seen as the primary caregivers, and many societies and labour markets

<sup>5</sup> Unpaid care work is caring for persons or undertaking housework without any explicit monetary compensation. The majority of unpaid care work in nearly all societies takes place within households, most often provided by women and girls. But unpaid care work can also take place outside families for friends, neighbours, and community members and within a variety of institutions (public, market-based, non-profit) on a voluntary basis. See Resolution I of the 19<sup>th</sup> ICLS [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms\\_230304.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_230304.pdf) and ILO 2018, Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_633135.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633135.pdf)

continue to function largely on this assumption. The latest available time use survey data show that in all G20 countries, women spend more hours than men in performing domestic chores and looking after children or other family members. For example, women’s time devoted to unpaid care work ranges from 5 hours and 30 minutes per day in Turkey to 3 hours and 8 minutes in the Republic of Korea. In contrast, men’s time spent on unpaid care work ranges from 2 hours and 52 minutes per day in Australia to only 31 minutes in India (Figure 4). When the number of hours spent in paid and unpaid work are combined, women’s working days are longer than men’s everywhere, although there are significant variations across countries. This is why women who work for pay are often said to work a “second shift” – one at work and another at home.

**Figure 4. Time spent daily in unpaid care work, paid work and total work, by sex, latest year**



Note: Time-use estimates are based on time-use surveys that collect information with a diary method. Latest year in parentheses: Argentina (2005); Australia (2006); Canada (2015); China (2008); France (2010); Germany (2012); India (1998-1999); Italy (2013-2014); Japan (2011); Republic of Korea (2014); South Africa (2010); Turkey (2014-2015); United Kingdom (2015); United States (2016). Age group in parentheses: Argentina (15-74); Australia (15+); Canada (15+); China (15-74); France (15+); Germany (10+); India (6+); Italy (15+); Japan (10+); Republic of Korea (10+); South Africa (10+); Turkey (10+); United Kingdom (16+); United States (15+).

Source: ILO 2018. Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work (Geneva).

As time is a finite resource, women’s availability to engage in paid employment is seriously constrained by the long hours they spend working at home for their family. It also explains the higher incidence of part-time work among women (Figure 10).

***Narrowing the gender gap in participation will also require tailored policies for different groups of women.***<sup>6</sup>

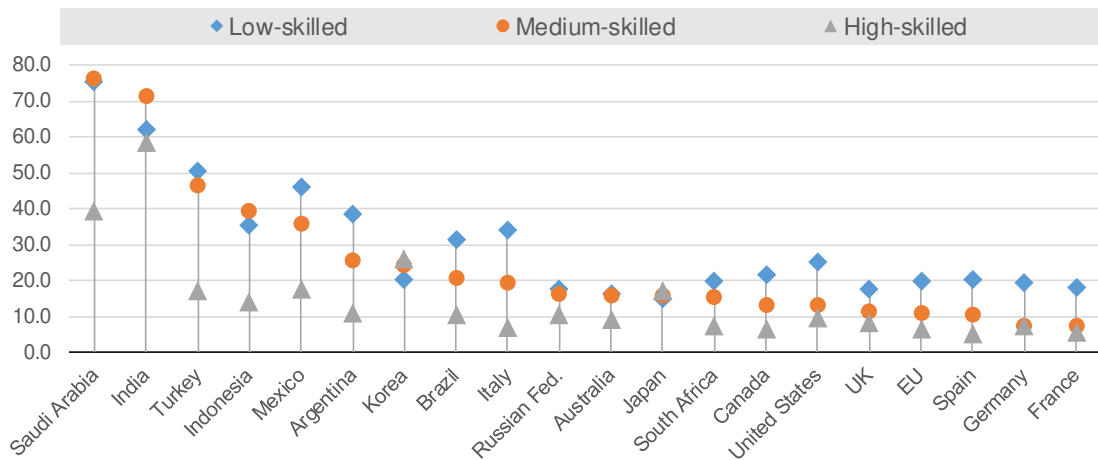
In all G20 economies, with the exception of Korea, gender gaps in participation are lower, often substantially so, for the more highly educated (Figure 5). In many advanced G20 countries, upper-secondary and tertiary degree completion rates are higher for young women and young men, but better orientation in the field of study would help ensuring better chances in the labour market. For emerging G20 countries, efforts to reduce further early school dropouts for girls (and boys) is crucial. But at the same time, for those already out of education, helping low-skilled women participate in the labour market would appear to be a key policy challenge in virtually all G20 economies.

<sup>6</sup> The need for policies focusing on disadvantaged women such as those who are low-skilled with children is highlighted in OECD. 2017. *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle* (Paris).



**Figure 5. Gender gap in participation is larger among the low skilled, 2017**

% point difference in labour force participation between men and women (aged 25-64) by level of education



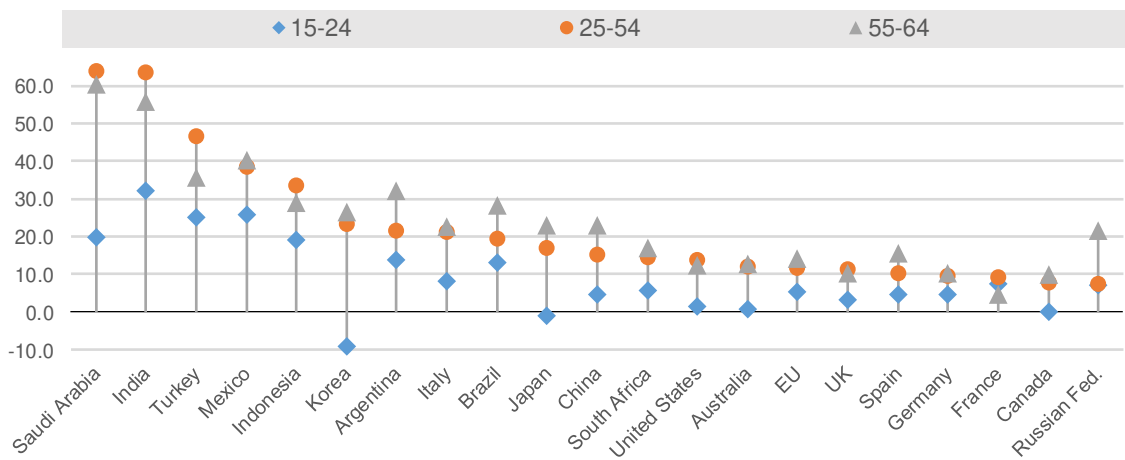
Note: Low skilled refers to below upper secondary education; Medium-skilled refers to upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education; and, High-skilled refers to tertiary education. Data refer to 2012 for India.

Source: OECD Education Database and OECD estimates based on the National Sample Survey for India.

Gender gaps in participation are also lower at younger ages than at older ages in all G20 economies (except in France, where the gap is lowest for persons aged 55-64) (Figure 6). In Japan and Korea, the rate of participation is even higher for young women than for young men. However, the gap is still substantial in several G20 emerging economies such as India, Turkey, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Argentina and Brazil, reflecting high shares of young women who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) as well as high adolescent fertility rates. A widening of the gap around the start of parenthood in nearly all G20 economies, and in the emerging economies in particular, reflects a motherhood penalty for women in terms of their participation in the labour force. A further widening at older ages in many countries reflects both generational differences in participation but also the difficulties women face in re-entering the labour force after a period of inactivity caring for young children and discrimination against older working women.

**Figure 6. Gender gap in participation increases with age, 2018**

% point difference in labour force participation between men and women by age



Note: The data refer to: 2010 for China; 2012 for India; and the population aged 15-24 to the population aged 16-24 for the United States.

Source: OECD calculations based on national labour force surveys and, for China, census data.

### Considerable gender gaps in job quality

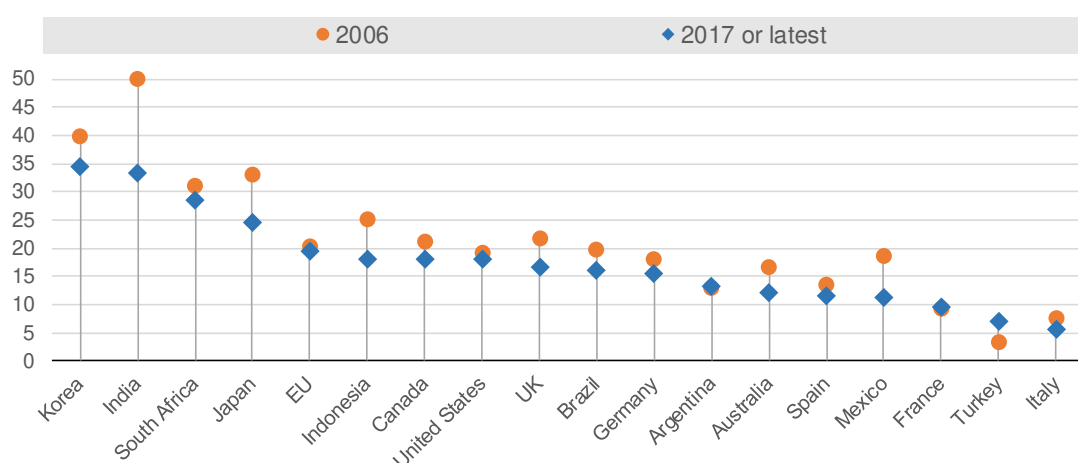
Tackling the gender gap in participation is fundamental for improving gender equality in the labour market but needs to be accompanied by measures to tackle gender gaps in job quality. More women are now entering and remaining in the workforce but are still more likely than men to be working in poor quality jobs. Raising the quality of job opportunities for women would not only enhance their well-being but also enhance their incentives to participate in the labour market and reduce the underutilisation of their skills.

### The gender pay gap has declined but remains substantial

Women continue to earn substantially less than men in most G20 countries. In terms of median full-time earnings, women earn between 30-35% less than men in Korea and India, down to a gap of 10% or less in France, Turkey and Italy (Figure 7). A comparatively narrow pay gap in Turkey reflects the small share of women in wage employment who are often more educated than their male peers. **There has been a small reduction in the gender pay gap over the past decade in nearly all G20 countries.** However, the pace at which the gap is closing remains weak in most countries and has even stalled in some countries in recent years.

**Figure 7. Gender pay gaps remain substantial, 2006 and 2018**

For full-time median earnings, difference between male and female earnings divided by male earnings (%)



Note: The data refer to gross (monthly or weekly) earnings of full-time wage and salary workers. The data for 2017 refer to: 2012 for India; 2014 for the EU, France, Spain and Turkey; 2015 for Brazil and South Africa; and 2016 for Italy and Germany. The data for 2006 refer to 2008 for South Africa.

Source: OECD Earnings Distribution Database, OECD estimates based on national labour force surveys for Argentina, Brazil, India and Indonesia, and the NIDS panel survey for South Africa.

### The incidence of low pay is higher for women

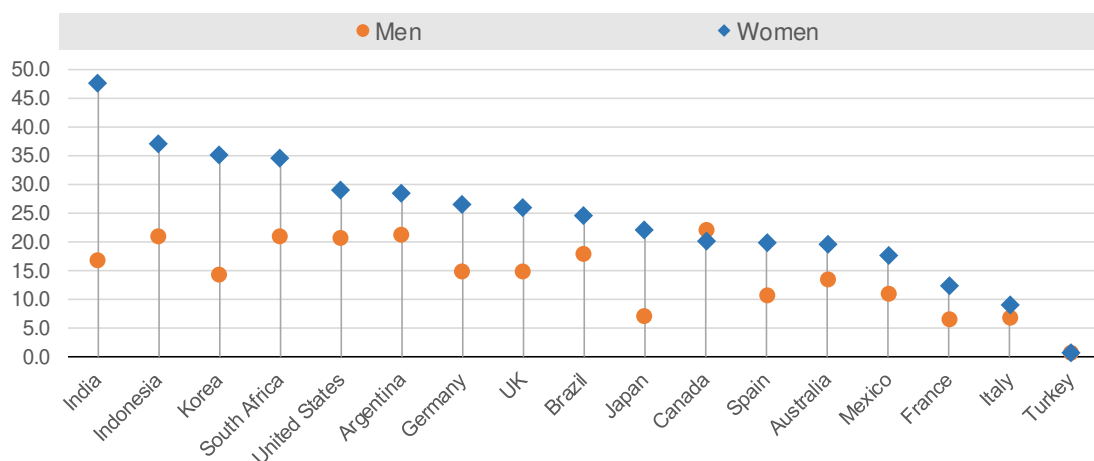
**Women in full-time work also face a higher risk than men of working in low-paid jobs.** With the noticeable exception of Canada, the incidence of “low pay” among full-time workers, defined as less than two-thirds of gross median earnings, is higher among women than among men in nearly all G20 economies (Figure 8). Around a third to almost a half of women who work full-time have low-paid jobs in South Africa, Korea, Indonesia and India. This proportion is also high at over one quarter in the United Kingdom, Germany, Argentina and the United States.

Motherhood is an important driver of the wage penalty for women. Working mothers with two children often earn less on average than working women without children and even less than working fathers. By contrast, working fathers earn on average more than their male peers without children. A commonly observed pattern is that men increase their working hours when children arrive, while women may reduce theirs, which may explain at least part of this gap. However, in countries that managed to reduce

the motherhood wage penalty through family-friendly policies, the father premium has become the main driver of the wage gap between working fathers and working mothers.

**Figure 8. Women are at a higher risk of low pay, 2017**

Percentage of full-time workers by gender who are in a low-paid job



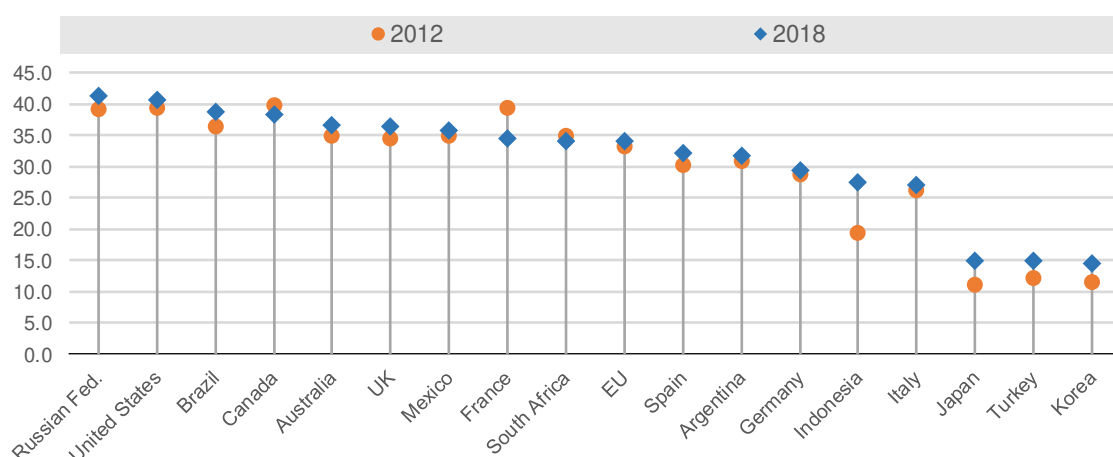
Note: The incidence of low pay as defined as less than two-thirds of gross median earnings for full time employees. 2012 for India; 2014 for France, Spain and Turkey; 2015 for Brazil and South Africa; 2016 for Australia, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Source: OECD Earnings Distribution Database, OECD estimates based on national labour force surveys for Argentina, Brazil, India and Indonesia, and OECD estimates based on panel survey for South Africa (NIDS).

The gender gap in earnings and in the incidence of low pay are partly explained by gender segregation by occupation, with women more crowded into lower paying occupations than men. In contrast, the proportion of women in higher paying occupations such as managers remains low in all G20 economies (Figure 9). Currently, women account for around 40% of all managerial jobs in Russia and the US, but this declines to around 15% in Japan, Turkey and Korea. *Since 2012, only modest progress has been made in most G20 countries in increasing the share of women in management roles.* Social norms and gender stereotypes, which create a glass ceiling for women, coupled with women’s shorter working hours, continue to be obstacles to more equal representation of women in leadership positions.

**Figure 9. Women’s share of employment in managerial jobs, 2012 and 2018**

Percentages



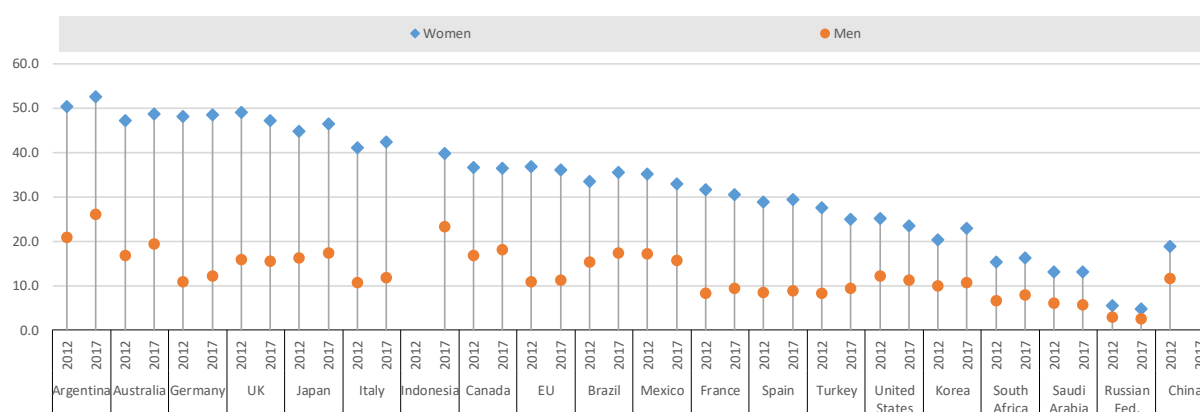
Note: 2012 refers to 2013 for Korea and Mexico. 2018 refers to 2017 for Canada and Russia. Because of breaks in the series, the change in the shares between 2012 and 2018 should be interpreted with caution in France, Indonesia and Russia.

Source: ILOSTAT and OECD estimates based on national labour force surveys.

Women are also more likely than men to work in some non-standard forms of employment (NSFE), i.e. temporary employment, part-time and on-call work, temporary agency work and other multiparty employment relationships, as well as disguised employment and dependent self-employment. In 2017, in all G20 countries, the share of part-time employment in total employment was higher for women than men (Figure 10). The gender gap in part-time share of employment is around 30 percentage points or more in Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Australia and Japan. Since 2012, there have been mixed trends across G20 countries in the importance of part-time work as a share of total employment. There have been small rises in some countries but also small falls in others. These changes have been similar for women and men in most countries, and consequently **there has been little change in the often large gender gap in the incidence of part-time work**. Women are also often over-represented in temporary jobs. Various factors explain the higher presence of women in NSFE: their greater care-giving responsibilities, their higher presence in occupations that typically recruit on an on-call basis, the structure of the economy and women’s lower bargaining power because of their lower unionization rate and lower coverage by collective agreements.

Part-time and temporary work can be an important means for women to integrate into the labour force. However, especially when involuntary, these forms of work may be associated with lower hourly wages than full-time work, lower social security benefits and fewer training opportunities, which jeopardises women’s chances to obtain better-quality jobs.

**Figure 10. The gender gap in part-time work remains large, 2012-2017**  
Proportion of all employed persons working less than 35 hour per week (%)



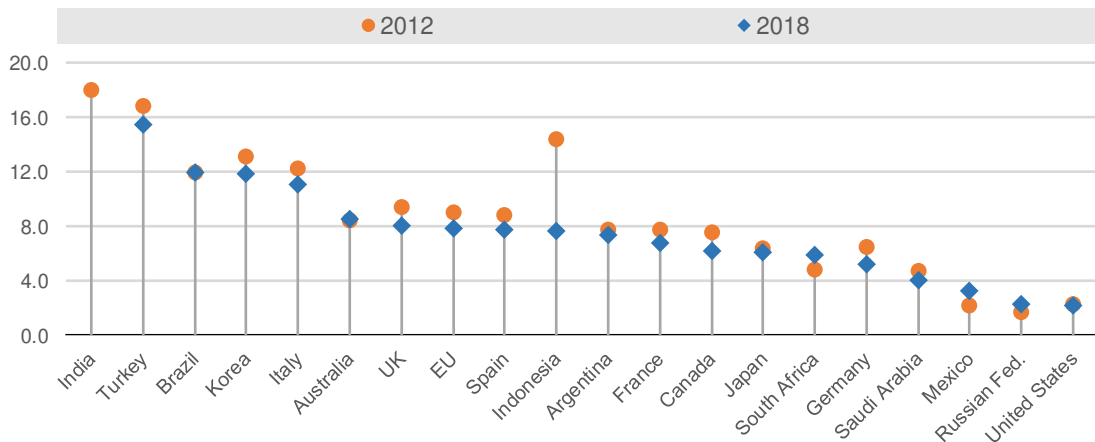
Note: All persons in employment, wage and salary workers only in the United States. Usual hours worked per week except for Argentina, China, Japan, Korea and Saudi Arabia. The data for 2012 refer to 2010 for China and the data for 2017 refer to 2015 for Brazil and Saudi Arabia.

Source: OECD Employment Database, Census 2010 data for China, results of the labour force survey for Saudi Arabia and OECD estimates based on the Encuesta Permanente de Hogares for Argentina and Sakernas for Indonesia.

Self-employment provides another opportunity for women to participate in the labour market. In contrast with the large gender gap in the incidence of part-time work, there is a smaller gap in the incidence of self-employment (including own account workers), ranging from 18 percentage points in India to 5 percentage points or less in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Russia and the United States (Figure 11). However, women entrepreneurs face a number of added challenges. Female-owned businesses are often smaller and grow less rapidly than those owned by men, and are more likely to close during the initial years after start-up. Especially in developing countries, limited access to financial capital, management advice and business training remain significant constraints to female entrepreneurship.

**Figure 11. Small decline in the gender gap in self-employment, 2012 and 2018**

% point gender difference in share of self-employment in total employment



Note: The data include own account workers. 2012 refers to 2013 for Saudi Arabia. 2018 refers to 2015 for Saudi Arabia and 2017 for Argentina and Russia.

Source: ILOSTAT and OECD estimates based on national labour force surveys.

### 3. Policy action<sup>7</sup>

#### *Increasing women's labour force participation rate*

As reported last year, all G20 countries have introduced national gender equality plans and strategies aimed at advancing the agenda of women at work (e.g. Argentina, Australia, EU, France, India, Spain and Turkey). These policy frameworks bring together measures under the responsibility of different governmental agencies, **including the need to collect more and accurate gender-disaggregated data**. For instance, in 2018 the Australian Government issued the Women's Economic Security Package, a \$119.2 million package of initiatives over four years focussing on three key pillars: workforce participation; earning potential; and economic independence. The Package contains several measures, including a new Time Use Survey, a Reducing Barriers to Work Forum and a new entrepreneurship grants programme Boosting Female Founders. In Canada, the Gender Results Framework seeks, among others, to promote equal opportunities for women and men as well as diversified paths in education and skills development; equal and full participation in the economy and gender equality in leadership roles and at all levels of decision-making. In Australia, the targeted policy measures are supported by the *Towards 2025 strategy*, a whole-of-government strategy led by the Office for Women under the Prime Minister's department. In the EU, in 2017, the European Commission adopted, in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the initiative on Work-life balance for working parents and carers (see page 19 for further details).

To increase women's participation in the labour market, including from ethnic minorities (e.g. the United Kingdom), many G20 countries have set **time-bound numerical targets** (e.g. Australia, France, Japan, Republic of Korea), even in traditionally male-dominated trades (e.g. France). Targets have also been established for a higher presence of women in management and leadership positions (e.g. Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey)

<sup>7</sup> This review of recent policy measures in the G20 economies also covers the Netherlands, which has observer status under the Japanese Presidency of the G20 and which submitted an Employment Plan.

and for women entrepreneurs (e.g. France, Mexico), including in the digital and rural sector (e.g. France).

A common feature which is emerging among all G20 countries is a stronger emphasis on **monitoring the effectiveness and impact of such policies and initiatives** (e.g. Australia, EU, Germany, France, Japan, Republic of Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom as well as in the Netherlands). In this regard, some countries have established specific and dedicated agencies or bodies to advise the Government on how to maximise women's economic contribution to the economy (e.g. Argentina, the United Kingdom) or, assess and implement the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination (e.g. Italy) or has expanded the mandate for gender equality to embrace also sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (Canada). Some countries have also established national coordination groups to ensure dialogue among relevant stakeholders, including social partners, when developing such policies (e.g. Argentina and the Russian Federation). In Australia, private sector employers with 100 or more employees are required to report annually to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. This Workplace Gender Equality Reporting is designed so that individual organisations and industries can monitor, reflect upon and improve their own gender equality performance, from employment and working arrangements to remuneration. A forward-looking focus, projecting impacts of policy and population changes over time would complement and enhance the monitoring of measures of gender equality, and help member countries to assess their own progress towards meeting the Brisbane goal.

To address **gender-based discrimination prior to entry into the labour market**, visible efforts have been made to remove sex discrimination in education and the participation of girls (e.g. India) or to lift the ban on women driving (e.g. Saudi Arabia). Increasing attention has also been devoted to tackling persistent sex discriminatory practices (e.g. India), including those related to pregnancy and maternity in accessing the labour market both in the public (e.g. China) and in the private sector (e.g. Netherlands).

Some countries have also taken steps towards the **elimination of legal barriers to women's employment** (e.g. the Russian Federation) or night work (e.g. India, where women are now permitted to work at night subject to the provision of shelter, rest room, night crèche, women's toilet, protection from sexual harassment and transportation). In this regard, measures have been introduced to increase the participation of women in male-dominated sectors, by providing apprenticeship incentive grants or training in sectors such as construction and other male-dominated trades (e.g. Argentina, Canada). France has adopted sectorial action plans through social dialogue and established the specific target of reaching an employment share of one third of women in male-dominated sectors by 2025 (currently 12 per cent).

Encouraging more women to participate in the labour market requires also supporting them through **work-life transitions**, such as school to work, becoming parents or having to take care of family members in need, changing jobs, and moving into retirement.<sup>8</sup> This has been an area of increasing attention in all G20 countries, which, in recent years, have introduced measures to favour women's return to work either after childbirth or long-term unemployment due to caring responsibilities (e.g. Australia, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom). Initiatives vary from re-skilling, including in basic digital skills, and promoting lifelong learning and distance programmes (e.g. Argentina, China, India, Mexico, Netherlands and the United Kingdom), providing vocational training (e.g. the Russian Federation and Turkey), job counselling, child benefits and childcare services to mothers (e.g. France, Japan, the Russian Federation and Turkey), particularly the ones from low- and modest-income families and

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<sup>8</sup> ILO. 2019. *Work for a brighter future – Global Commission on the Future of Work* (Geneva).

indigenous groups (e.g. Canada). In Germany, a pilot programme combines blended learning, support career, sponsorship and household support services for women willing to re-enter the labour market. Since the beginning of the programme in the year 2015, 6,300 women have joined, and so far about 36.5 per cent of them have been integrated into the labour market.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, through the Good early childhood education and care programme the Federal government has allocated 5.5 billion Euros over the span of the next four years (2019-22) to improve the quality in day-care for children and reduce the financial burden on parents. Some countries encourage men, particularly in the public sector, to use flexible leave provisions (e.g. Australia, United Kingdom), provide incentives to employers who offer employees paid leave (e.g. the United States) or who re-employ new mothers (e.g. Italy, Republic of Korea and Turkey). There are also initiatives targeting women facing higher barriers in entering or re-entering the labour market, such as migrant mothers (e.g. Germany) and other disadvantaged groups, including women with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse and indigenous women, mature age women and widows and women veterans (e.g. Australia, Canada, India, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Turkey and the United States). However, it is becoming clear that in order to build and maintain momentum towards achieving gender equality, countries need to address cultural and social barriers, too.

A common area of work for almost all G20 countries is **entrepreneurship development for women**, such as increased financing, training opportunities, services and gender-smart procurement (e.g. Argentina, Australia, Canada, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Spain, Turkey and the United States). Additional measures include tax reduction, facilitated loans, subsidized interest rates, bank guarantees, training in management, technical consulting, assistance for preparation of business plan and mentorship, micro-credit systems, awarded grant practices, simplified registration procedures and formalization of business (e.g. India, France, Mexico, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Turkey). In Germany, a dedicated nationwide governmental agency offers advice and counselling, networks and professional development for women's start-ups and women entrepreneurs. In Italy, a special section of the State-guaranteed revolving fund for Small and Medium Enterprises facilitates women entrepreneurs obtaining a loan. In India, an online marketing platform for women entrepreneurs, Self Help Groups and NGOs has been created to showcase their products and services.

All these programmes may **target women at different skills levels, in different economic sectors or in especially disadvantaged or fragile geographical areas**, including refugee women (e.g. Germany and Turkey). For instance, France, the Russian Federation and the United States have paid special attention to women business incubators and innovation in the digital economy. Other countries have pursued the promotion of women's entrepreneurship in rural or marginalized territories through the creation or transfer of businesses (e.g. France) or as part of national initiatives to favour the integration of women in the economy (e.g. China, France, Turkey). Other countries have supported the creation of networks of women entrepreneurs that serve as role models for girls and women to embark on this professional path (e.g. Germany) or adopted a comprehensive approach, which supports women entrepreneurs expand their businesses by addressing the critical growth stages (e.g. Canada).

In addition, **awareness raising** features high on the agenda of a number of G20 national gender equality plans (e.g. Argentina, Australia, EU, France, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey and the Netherlands) as a measure to challenge gender stereotypes and well-entrenched social norms limiting societies to benefit from women's full participation in employment. Such campaigns focus on the importance of work-life

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<sup>9</sup> The 2nd phase of the project started in 2019. It will run until December 2021.

balance and on the need to share care responsibilities more equally between women and men (e.g. Netherlands and the United Kingdom).

### *Improving the quality of women's earnings*

Some countries have identified a decline in the **gender pay gap** as an indicator to assess progress in the implementation of national policies or strategies for gender equality at work (e.g. France and the United Kingdom). The gender pay gap derives from a host of factors, including a lower return to women's education and lower average job tenure. However, as a significant proportion of the gender pay gap remains unexplained after controlling for these factors, some countries have embarked on in-depth diagnoses of and research on the gender pay gap (e.g. the United Kingdom) and of how it may evolve in the coming years in the light of ongoing transformations in the world of work (e.g. Argentina and Australia in the public service); or have adopted proactive pay equity laws to ensure that women receive equal pay for work of equal value (e.g. Canada, for women working in federally regulated industries). In the EU, the European Commission has adopted an Action Plan on tackling the gender pay gap to be delivered by the end of 2019, which includes a set of 24 actions ranging from a better valuation of skills in female-dominated occupations to greater awareness of the importance of gender-neutral job classification systems.

**Occupational and sectorial segregation** and the gender composition of the workforce significantly influence the gender pay gap and, in particular, low or unequal wages for women. For this reason, some countries encourage the incorporation of a gender equity perspective in companies' recruitment and career advancement processes with a view to identifying barriers to horizontal and vertical segregation and pay inequalities (e.g. Argentina). A number of G20 countries seek to reduce gender occupational segregation and increase women's access to better-paying jobs through the diversification of skills options for young women through Technical Vocational Educational Training in non-traditional occupations and growth industries (e.g. Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States), by encouraging young women to engage in STEM studies and occupational trajectories (e.g. Argentina, Australia, Canada, EU, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation and the United States), including by promoting classroom learning and hands-on learning in a workplace and by providing employers with wage subsidies (e.g. Canada).

Investments in ensuring a greater **participation of women in STEM** fields and careers can take the form of internships and career advice, competitive grant programmes, awareness raising for women (e.g. Australia and the United States), fairs and financial and in-kind support for STEM programmes or through summer camps to encourage female students to enrol in STEM secondary and tertiary education (e.g. Italy and the United States), mentoring and employment opportunities offered by private companies to female graduates of engineering programs (e.g. Turkey) or for networks, role models and other initiatives to promote greater participation of girls and women in digital studies and careers (e.g. EU and the United Kingdom). Exposure to STEM learning can begin at very early stages for children between three and five years from under-represented groups, including pre-school girls (e.g. Australia) and girls in primary and secondary education (e.g. EU). Some countries provide initiatives targeting indigenous women (e.g. Canada) and teenage girls who have failed to gain higher education, as well as rural women and women with disabilities (e.g. China).

Another means to lead to positive outcomes in addressing gender inequalities at the low end of the wage distribution has been through increases in real **minimum wages** (e.g. Germany, Japan, Spain, the Russian Federation, Turkey and the United Kingdom) or the actual or planned introduction of national mandatory minimum wages, complementing existing sectorial minimum wages (e.g. India and South Africa). In Germany, there are sector-specific minimum wages which are usually higher than the



national, general minimum wage, for example in the industrial cleaning or the long-term care sectors, where the majority of employees are women.

However, as the gender pay gap remains persistent, additional measures have been developed and introduced in many G20 countries. This is particularly important in a context of an ageing population, as the gender pay gap also leads to a larger gender pension gap. Ensuring **equal pay** throughout the working lives of women will have a positive cumulative impact on reducing the gender pension gap and ensuring women's economic security throughout their lives. Depending on the national context and existing governance structure, different wage transparency measures have been emerging in recent years. To this end, pay audits and reports on gender pay differentials, and the underpinning causes, are to be produced by enterprises of a particular size, which must take measures to narrow unjustified gender differentials (e.g. Germany and the United Kingdom). In the United Kingdom, in the first year of reporting (March 2017 – March 2018), over 10,000 employers reported their data, representing 100% compliance and the median gender pay gap has fallen to a record low of 17.9%, down from 18.4% previous year.

Recent **voluntary measures to address pay equity**, such as equality labels granted to companies who have gender parity in remuneration (e.g. France), company-based action plans, codes of conduct as well as awareness raising campaigns (e.g. Netherlands and the United Kingdom), have also become more common. However, while it is encouraging to see a revived interest in ensuring equal pay, indications are that, unless measures are compulsory, their application remains very limited. To accelerate the closure of the gender wage gap, some G20 countries (i.e. Australia, Canada, Germany, Republic of Korea and South Africa) have become members of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) promoted by the ILO, UN Women and the OECD. EPIC provides a platform for peer-to-peer exchanges, dissemination of good practices and methodologies for the measurement of the gender pay gap.

Most G20 countries also continue to **promote women's access to management and leadership positions**, including in the corporate world, by setting targets regarding the gender composition of boards of large companies (e.g. the United Kingdom) or by introducing women's quotas and targets at the management and executive levels in public (e.g. Australia, Germany, Italy and Republic of Korea) and private companies (e.g. Germany and the Netherlands). In some countries, companies who fail to achieve these targets, are required to report what steps and measures will be taken to increase the representation of the underrepresented sex (e.g. the Netherlands). Other countries promote *ad hoc* mentorship programmes or networking opportunities (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Spain). All these measures are often coupled with the creation of databases of "board-ready women" (e.g. Australia and the Netherlands), and monitored by supervisory mechanisms (e.g. Germany and the Netherlands).

### ***Increasing labour market security***

Challenges related to **labour market duality** between employees with open-ended contracts and those on temporary contracts (e.g. Argentina and Republic of Korea) remain considerable as well as prevalence of **informal employment** in several G20 countries (e.g. India and Mexico). Some countries have extended protection to categories of vulnerable workers, in particular domestic workers (e.g. Argentina) and to self-employed (e.g. Italy). Others have introduced provisions limiting the overuse of agency workers (e.g. China) and to counter a rise of illicit intermediaries and false subcontractors acting as informal employment agencies (e.g. Turkey). In Japan, new rules aimed at ensuring employment stability for employees on fixed-term contracts have been introduced, while Indonesia has extended work accidents and death insurance to home-workers.

To facilitate the **transition from the informal to the formal economy**, many countries have introduced policies aimed at decreasing obstacles to formalization such as tax reduction, simplified registration procedures, facilitation of business group formation and cooperatives (e.g. France). In addition, a common feature is the formalization of micro or small businesses through subsidized interest rates, or micro-credit services targeting small-sized enterprises owned or managed by women (e.g. Turkey). Intensified labour inspections in sectors with a higher incidence of informal employment are reported in a number of countries (e.g. Argentina, China, Mexico and the Russian Federation), including among domestic workers (e.g. Turkey). In its Strategic Plan for Decent Work 2018-2020, Spain has committed to improving the functioning of the Labour and Social Security Inspectorate with a view to fighting abuse and fraud in the use of temporary contracts, part-time contracts, excessive working hours and unpaid overtime. Since the start of the initiative in August 2018, 46,554 fraudulent temporary contracts transformed into permanent (57.8% of all investigated contracts) and 147,701 transformation unprompted temporary contracts transformed into permanent. In its 2019-20 budget, the Australian government announced an additional \$9.2 million over four years to enhance educational, investigative and enforcement capabilities to promote compliance with labour laws.

An increased number of G20 countries have introduced measures to assist low-income earners and people, including women, at risk of social exclusion (e.g. Australia, Netherland, Spain and the United Kingdom).

Recognizing the linkages between labour market security and the degree to which women and men have **effective access to adequate social protection** throughout the course of their lives, some G20 countries have extended social protection to poor households, migrant workers (e.g. Argentina), workers in the informal economy (e.g. Argentina and Mexico), and to part-time workers (e.g. France, Republic of Korea and Turkey). Spain has provisions to reduce the pension gap between women and men by recognizing the “demographic contributions” of working women and compensating them for their lower contributions to the social security system (sometimes a consequence of interrupted working careers due to maternity). Subsidies or tax deduction to the payment of employers’ social security contributions are used to encourage employers to register their employees with social security (e.g. Argentina, Mexico and Turkey).

### ***Achieving better working conditions***

A convergence of measures among all G20 countries is visible in the area of **care policies and provisions**. A system of legislation providing paid family and care leave for both women and men is an evolving area of intervention, where interesting developments are evident. India has recently increased maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks, while China has taken steps to further extend maternity insurance and in the EU the recent Directive on Work-Life Balance for parents and carers, which is part of the Work-Life Balance Initiative, introduces a new right to paternity leave of 10 working days, remunerated at sick pay level, and to carers’ leave of 5 working days per year. Moreover, it reinforces the current right to 4 months of parental leave by making two out of the 4 months paid and non-transferable, as well as the right to request flexible working arrangements by extending its scope. In Canada, extended employment insurance maternity and parental benefits have become more flexible to support Canadian families. In 2018, Spain increased paid paternity leave from four to five weeks for all workers (and a proposal to further extend it to 8 weeks is under discussion in the Parliament). In addition, an agreement was reached to gradually extend paternity leave up to 16 weeks in the public sector. According to the latest available data, over 190,000 parents benefitted from paternity leave between January and September 2018. In the Netherlands, working fathers are, as of January 2019, entitled to one work week of paid paternity leave. As of July 2020, paid paternity leave will be extended to six weeks (the first week at full wage, and the remainder at 70 per cent of the wage). Measures such as shared parental leave have been provided for in the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, while

more flexible parental leave regulations have been introduced in the Netherlands and in Germany. In Japan, employees are entitled to extended child care leave (until children reach age 2) in the absence of childcare facilities.

Since care does not end with infancy, many G20 countries have introduced provisions related to “care leave” (e.g. the Netherlands) or extended its length (e.g. Canada). This is an area of legislation that requires further attention in the future, given that increased life expectancy also comes with an increased demand for care services. To cope with all the care demands, a higher proportion of women work in **part-time or “marginal part-time work”**, namely less than 15 hours a week,<sup>10</sup> compared to men. Against this backdrop, recent legislative reforms aim at ensuring that part-time workers are not discriminated against (e.g. Japan).

While part-time work should be an option for those who want to take it, greater choice in **time use** would be particularly effective within a world of work where everybody needs to be more involved in care. Some G20 countries have introduced measures to adjust working time according to care responsibilities, such as the right to request flexible working arrangements (e.g. Canada, Italy, Netherlands and the United Kingdom) or teleworking in the public sector (e.g. France and Saudi Arabia) Germany grants workers the entitlement to reduce their working time for a fixed period, while other countries grant this entitlement to working parents (e.g. the Russian Federation). In Turkey, the latter can benefit from this entitlement until the child has reached the compulsory primary school age. Afterwards they must return to their previous working time. In France, one or both parents are entitled to stop or reduce their professional activity to care for their child under 3 years old, while in Saudi Arabia mothers returning to work after maternity leave can reduce their working day by one hour until their child reaches age 2.

Expanding **investments in childcare infrastructure and services** is another area of intervention identified by a number of G20 countries as a priority (e.g. Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United States). In order to make returning to work both attractive and feasible, high quality childcare which contributes to good outcomes for children must be both available and affordable. Overall, there are multiple policy measures in the area of childcare and reconciliation of work and life. These include childcare entitlements, including tax-free childcare (e.g. the United Kingdom) or tax-exemption of tax shares for children (e.g. France and the Russian Federation); gradual increases in subsistence allowances according to the number of children and marital status of the employee (e.g. Turkey); childcare allowances for the unemployed or informal workers and childcare in the workplace (e.g. Argentina); subsidies to child care costs for women with below a specified level of earnings (e.g. Saudi Arabia); tax deductions for companies signing firm-level collective agreements with specific measures to reconcile work and private life (e.g. Italy where, as of May 2018, around 1,500 firms have benefitted from this incentive since 2017) or provision of compulsory pre-schooling from early age (e.g. France where pre-schooling is compulsory starting from the age of 3). Turkey provides childcare support for women who participate in vocational training courses and on-the-job- training programmes through active labour force programmes in industry and manufacturing sectors. India makes it mandatory for establishments having 50 or more employees to provide crèche facilities. While overall emphasis is on provision of childcare, there are new elements (e.g. France, Japan and the Netherlands) that indicate the importance of quality childcare through improving working conditions of care workers and improving quality requirements. In Canada, the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework guides new investments in this area towards principles of quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility and inclusiveness. The EU has also co-funded work-life balance measures and innovative working arrangements in companies via European Structural and Investment Funds.

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<sup>10</sup> Messenger J. and P. Wallot. 2015. The diversity of ‘marginal’ part-time employment, *INWORK Policy brief No. 7*. ILO: Geneva.

In the last few years, most G20 countries have enacted measures to **prevent and address gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work**, through new and underway legislation (e.g. India, Mexico and Saudi Arabia). Some countries have taken steps to prevent violence and harassment against women in the workplace for reasons of pregnancy, childbirth or for requesting child care leave (e.g. Japan). Recognizing that there can be a relationship between the world of work and the private sphere, some countries have introduced leave provisions with a view to helping women who are victims of violence receive the support they need (e.g. Argentina, Canada and Spain). Australia released a framework for agencies to use in supporting employees affected by domestic and family violence and promoted broader investments that drive reduction in violence, including income support, education, housing and health measures. India has regulations that provide all private and public sector organizations having ten or more workers with the obligation to constitute internal complaints committees for receiving complaints of sexual harassment. In France, companies with more than 250 employees are required to appoint a HR focal point for issues related to sexism and sexual harassment. Likewise, companies that promote social dialogue on discrimination and violence are recognized with the “Equality Label”. Gender-based violence is also included in labour inspections practices (e.g. Mexico) and training (e.g. France). Increasingly, collective bargaining agreements include clauses preventing and addressing gender-based violence at home and at the workplace or providing for work-reconciliation measures such as flexible working patterns, parenthood and welfare (e.g. Argentina, Italy).

#### 4. Conclusions and recommendations

In 2018, further progress was made by most G20 countries towards meeting the G20 gender goal of reducing the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 percent by 2025. However, in some countries where the gender gap is particularly large, achieving the goal remains challenging and approximately half of G20 members are not on track to meet the goal (assuming a linear reduction in the participation gap year-on-year). This is in part linked to the fact that women continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid work, which increases notably with the presence of young children in the household. In addition, very long hours of work and overtime continue to be more widespread among men. A culture of long working hours not only has detrimental effects on workers’ health and productivity, but may also lead to stigma against workers who choose flexible working time arrangements, such as reduced hours or teleworking, thereby reinforcing the gender gap in unpaid work.<sup>11</sup> The persistent and large gender gap in the sharing of family responsibilities and domestic chores not only hinders progress in the reduction of the gender participation gap, it also has implications for the quality of work for men and women.

Gender gaps in job quality also remain substantial. The gender pay gap remains substantial in most G20 economies, and only very modest progress has been made in closing this gap. This is reflected in persistently large gender gaps in the incidence of low-paid work, access to managerial jobs and the incidence of non-standard forms of employment such as part-time work. Raising the quality of job opportunities available to women that allow for a better work-life balance would improve their well-being, enhance their incentives to participate in the labour market and reduce the underutilisation of their skills.

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<sup>11</sup> ILO. 2016. *Women at work: Trends 2016* (Geneva) and Lee, S.; McCann, D.M. and Messenger, J.C. 2007. *Working time around the world: Trends in working hours, laws and policies in a global comparative perspective*, Routledge Studies in the Modern World Economy (Geneva, ILO).

This report was not able to present evidence on progress in closing gender gaps in China and India, as recent labour market information covering the whole economy is not available. More generally, in all countries, further improvements in the availability of timely and comparable data are required to monitor closely how gender gaps in the labour market are evolving and the effectiveness of policy interventions. This will be particularly important going forward as ongoing transformations in the world of work are changing the nature of work and having very disparate effects on different segments of the population. How these changes will affect gender gaps in the labour market remains unclear. Projecting impacts of policy and population changes over time would complement and enhance existing monitoring of gender equality measures, and help member countries assess their progress towards meeting the Brisbane goal.

In terms of policy action to foster greater gender equality in the labour market, last year's report noted increased attention towards measures aimed at supporting women through work transitions, in particular returning to work after maternity. This year, G20 countries are converging in promoting better family leave policies and work-life balance, taking into consideration that greater choice over time use would be particularly effective within a world of work where everybody needs to be more involved in care. Overall efforts in increasing childcare provisions are re-confirmed practically in all G20 countries, while more efforts should be undertaken in the context of long-term care, including care leave provisions. While quality, affordable and inclusive public care services and well-designed care leave policies for both women and men will help to reduce women's unpaid work responsibilities, more needs to be done to ensure that men take on a bigger responsibility for unpaid work. There is scope for initiatives, such as well-tailored awareness-raising campaigns, that challenge deep-seated gender stereotypes and change mind-sets concerning what is the 'appropriate' role of women and men at home and at work.

Reinvigorated efforts are also noticeable in the context of tackling gender-based discrimination, including pregnancy and maternity status, and violence and harassment in the world of work. However, this is an area that should be further explored as concerns have been raised regarding the use of non-standard forms of employment, including in the platform economy, to circumvent the requirement to respect non-discriminatory provisions and maternity protection legislation for women.

Although entrepreneurship development remains a common intervention area among all G20 countries, more efforts should be devoted to ensure that such opportunities embrace all women, including older women. Recognizing their life experience, self-confidence and willingness to try new things would help to boost economies, including in rural areas, and tackle poverty in old ages, which is a growing concern in many G20 countries. However, it will also be important to ensure that there are adequate employment and social protections in place for these jobs.

Digital, green, and care are some of the sectors that are likely to dominate in the future. However, the overall social construct of societies tends to still direct women and men in different directions. Initiatives proposed by some countries to have a more mixed labour force, especially in sectors that are traditionally male dominated, could be scaled up. And vice-versa, sectors that are traditionally feminized need to attract more men. Vertical and horizontal occupational segregation remains a feature common to all G20 countries and certainly an area that continues to require policy attention, particularly in the context of persisting gender pay gaps and women's leadership penalty.