

To close the gender gap in jobs, women need new laws and men need new attitudes ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A new report from the OECD ^[3] about gender equality includes some good news: Roughly two-thirds of OECD countries have introduced new policies on pay equality since 2013, and more countries are also implementing paid paternity leave. But the research also highlights some less good news: the median female worker still earns almost 15% less than her male counterpart (on average, across the OECD) and that's barely budged since 2010.

The report looks at policies governments, educational institutions, and the private sector can pursue to close the gender employment gap (11% in the OECD) and the pay gap, as well as finding ways to get more girls pursuing STEM careers and more boys entering care-related jobs. To that end, in 2016, the OECD asked representatives of 35 member countries to choose the three "most effective ways to tackle barriers to female employment." Here's what they said:

[Infographic showing, "Survey of OECD members: Best ways to get more women working" -- "More accessible child care" ranks first, followed by "Equal pay for equal work", "Better access to better jobs" and finally, "More flexible work". View online.]

Some countries are making progress on these issues. Canada, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Slovakia, and Poland have implemented increased subsidies or benefits/rebates for public childcare. Norway and the UK have introduced free childcare. Since 2016, nine countries—Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Israel and Norway—have introduced compulsory gender quotas for private limited companies and state-owned enterprises. To promote transparency on pay, Australia, Japan, Germany, Lithuania, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK have implemented measures to require more detailed disclosure on gender pay gaps.

The OECD also asked countries what should be done to encourage men into more care-taking roles. The answers looked a lot different:

[Infographic: "Survey of OECD members: Best ways to get more men caregiving"]

So women need new laws, and men need new attitudes. It's not hard to see which of those is easier to implement. But the greatest reason for optimism is the fact that countries are making shared caregiving a priority. Since 2000, 10 OECD countries have put in place financial incentives to encourage fathers to take parental leave for at least two months.

When the OECD asked members to identify the most urgent gender equality issues, these were the top three:

- 21 of 37 countries said violence against women
- 16 said women being paid less than men for the same work
- 14 said the unequal sharing of household tasks

Now let's see what they actually do about it.

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