



International  
Labour  
Organization

# Women at Work in G20 countries: Policy action since 2017

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## 1. Introduction

G20 leaders at the 2014 Summit in Brisbane committed to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 per cent by the year 2025 (the 25x25 target). G20 Ministers of Labour agreed on a set of key principles to also improve the quality of women's employment.

Under the German Presidency of the G20, it was agreed to introduce a template<sup>1</sup> aimed at gathering information on the key policy measures that have been introduced or are planned to be put in place to achieve the 25x25 target and to improve women's quality of employment.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight key policy developments since 2017, as reported by countries using the above-mentioned template, underline new policy elements and draw some conclusions and suggestions for further acceleration of the achievement of the Brisbane target and commitments. It is neither complete nor in-depth, but is intended to stimulate some discussions by pointing to commonalities and specificities and identifying promising policy measures.

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

Practically all G20 countries have overarching national gender equality plans and strategies aimed at advancing the agenda of women at work. Some have recently introduced new policy elements (e.g. Australia); others have been revamped to have a more targeted approach (e.g. France). Overall, they embrace a more cohesive approach towards gender equality in the world of work (e.g. Argentina, Australia, France, India and Spain) as they bring together measures that cover different policy areas and involve multiple government agencies to facilitate policy coherence. This integrated approach is associated with greater attention being paid to monitoring the effectiveness and impact of the policies and initiatives implemented (e.g. Australia, Germany, United Kingdom, Japan, Republic of Korea and France).

As a matter of fact, most G20 countries have time-bound numerical targets for increasing the labour force participation of women (e.g. Australia, France, Japan, Republic of Korea), as well as targets for higher presence of women in management and leadership positions (e.g. Australia, France, Germany, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Turkey), for women entrepreneurs (e.g. Mexico), including in the digital and rural sector (e.g. France) and for large enterprises that formulate action plans in line with national legislation related to women's economic empowerment (e.g. Japan).

It is therefore interesting to observe that a number of countries are in a position to report gender gap reductions in labour force participation (e.g. Australia, France and Republic of Korea) and in the wage gap (e.g. United Kingdom). For instance, in Australia the participation gap between working age (15-64 years) men and women was 9.6 per cent as of February 2018, compared with 12.1 per cent in 2012. Likewise, in the United Kingdom the gender wage gap fell to a record of 9.1 per cent among companies that reported data according to recently enacted legislation.

Encouraging results were reported in the areas of women's entrepreneurship development in terms of increased financing and training opportunities for women entrepreneurs (e.g. Australia, Mexico and Turkey). For instance, Mexico has doubled the number of women targeted with loans from 7,000 (in 2016-2017) to 14,000 by 2018. Impact has also been reported in the sphere of childcare and work and

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<sup>1</sup> This paper only examines the information which was submitted by Argentina's Presidency by 21 May 2018. The countries covered are Argentina, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey and United Kingdom.

family balance in terms of increased investments in childcare facilities (e.g. Australia, Germany and Japan) and better working conditions for care workers (e.g. France, Japan). Japan, for example, has secured additional 320,000 childcare services by 2020.

Overall, boosting women's entrepreneurship development is an important area of action for the majority of G20 countries. These programmes may target women at different skills levels, in different economic sectors or in especially disadvantaged or fragile geographical areas. Attention to women business incubators and innovation in the digital economy is evident in France and the Russian Federation. National programmes and schemes offer entrepreneurship facilitators to support individuals and small businesses with training, business plan development, business mentoring and allowances (e.g. Argentina, Australia). A dedicated agency in Germany offers advice and counselling, networks and professional development for women's start-ups and entrepreneurs. Additional measures include tax reduction, facilitated loans, subsidized interest rates, bank guarantees, training in management, technical consulting, simplified registration procedures and formalization of business (e.g. India, Mexico, Republic of Korea and Turkey). The promotion of women's entrepreneurship is also pursued in rural or marginalized territories, as part of national initiatives to favour the integration of women in the economy (e.g. France, Turkey) or through the creation or transfer of businesses (e.g. France).

Many countries share a common interest in supporting women's return to work either after childbirth or long-term unemployment or as a result of gender-based violence (e.g. Argentina, Spain). Initiatives vary from re-skilling, including in basic digital skills, and promoting lifelong learning and distance programmes (e.g. Argentina, India, Mexico, United Kingdom), to encouraging more men to use flexible leave provisions (e.g. Australia, United Kingdom), or providing vocational training, job counselling and childcare services to mothers (e.g. in France for mothers with children 0-3 years old). Other measures include the payment of subsidies to employers who re-employ new mothers (e.g. Italy, Republic of Korea). 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 women, mature age women and widows (e.g. Australia and India). In the United Kingdom, the Flexible Learning Fund, a pilot initiative, will be scaled up in 2018 and integrated in the National Retraining Scheme.

In addition, awareness raising features high on the agenda of a number of G20 national gender equality plans (e.g. Argentina, Australia, France, Spain and Turkey) as a measure to challenge gender stereotypes and well-entrenched social norms limiting women to fully participate in employment. For instance, the "Men as Change Agents" programme in the United Kingdom showcases the contribution of male leaders championing gender equality. The 2018 Agents of Change power list celebrated 30 male leaders who are actively working alongside women to change working cultures and practices and drive gender equality initiatives.

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

The gender pay gap has been identified as the indicator to assess progress in the implementation of national policies or strategies for gender equality at work (e.g. France, United Kingdom). Low or unfair wages for women are often the result of horizontal and vertical occupational segregation. Some countries (e.g. Australia, France) are increasing efforts to promote gender diversity in the composition of the workforce both in the care and digital sectors. Others are promoting social dialogue to ensure a more gender balanced composition of male-dominated occupations (e.g. France). 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 (e.g. India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, United Kingdom) and by encouraging young women to engage in STEM studies and STEM occupational trajectories (e.g. Argentina, Australia, Russian Federation). Investments in preparing women to meet the challenges associated with the changing world of work can take the form of internships and career advice, competitive grant programmes, awareness raising on STEM careers for women (e.g. Australia), fairs and financial and in-kind support for STEM programmes or through summer camps to encourage female students to enrol in STEM tertiary education (e.g. Italy). Exposure to early STEM learning can begin at very early stages for children between three and five years from under-represented groups, including the child girl (e.g. Australia).

Most G20 countries also continue to facilitate 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. United Kingdom) or by introducing women's quotas at the management and executive levels in public (e.g. Australia, Germany, Republic of Korea) and private organizations (e.g. Germany), or by publishing the list of organizations that repeatedly fail to fill women's employment quotas (e.g. Japan). For instance, the United Kingdom has set a target of 33 per cent of women on boards, and 33 per cent of women in Executive Committees and positions reporting directly to the Executive Committee in the FTSE 350 by 2020.

Another means to improve women's earnings at the bottom of the pay and skills distribution has been through increases in real minimum wages (e.g. Japan, Russian Federation and United Kingdom) or the actual or planned introduction of national mandatory minimum wages, complementing existing sectoral minimum wages (e.g. India and South Africa).

Some countries are embarking on in-depth diagnoses of the gender pay gap 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). Others are promoting wage transparency, namely the right of employed persons to be informed about the median salary and salary components of colleagues of the other gender in occupations of equal value in the same or other companies (e.g. Germany, United Kingdom). 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, United Kingdom). To accelerate the closure of the gender wage gap, some G20 countries (i.e. Canada, Republic of Korea and South Africa) have become members of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) promoted by the ILO, UN Women and OECD. EPIC provides a platform for peer-to-peer exchanges, dissemination of good practices and methodologies for the measurement of the gender pay gap.

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

As highlighted in last year's concluding remarks, this is an area where more efforts need to be devoted. New measures to assist low-income earners have been introduced in Australia ('catch-up carry forward' programme) to improve the flexibility and equity of the superannuation system, including assisting low-income earners and those who take time out of the workforce to raise children or to care for a relative (of whom a high proportion are women), to save for retirement.

Challenges relating to labour market duality between employees with open-ended contracts and those on temporary contracts (e.g. Argentina and Republic of Korea) remain evident as well as prevalence of informal employment (e.g. India, Mexico and the Russian Federation).

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 promoted portability of social security rights for women migrant workers and rights awareness for informal workers (e.g. Argentina). Others have also extended social protection to poor households and to those working in the informal economy, including a package of health services, pensions and income security (e.g. Argentina, Mexico). Spain has provisions to reduce the gap between men and women with regard to pensions and recognize the “demographic contributions” of working women compensating their lower contributions to the social security system (sometimes a consequence of interrupted working careers due to maternity).

Several countries have active measures to facilitate transitions of economic units and workers to the formal economy through a combination of tax reduction, simplified registration procedures, facilitation of business group formation and cooperatives (e.g. France). 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). Subsidies or tax deduction to the payment of employers’ social security contributions are used to encourage employers to register their employees with the social security (e.g. Argentina, Mexico, Turkey). Unemployment benefits extended to all workers formally affiliated to social security have been introduced to prevent unemployed workers from looking for informal employment (e.g. Mexico).

Intensified labour inspections in sectors with a higher incidence of informal employment are reported in a number of countries (e.g. Argentina, Mexico, Russian Federation), while legislation on temporary agency employment has been passed to counter a rise of illicit intermediaries and false subcontractors acting as informal employment agencies (e.g. Turkey). Measures have also been adopted to enhance part-time workers’ income security by reducing the incidence of part-time employment on the pension level (e.g. France, Turkey) or by extending social security coverage to part-time workers working for multiple employers for a given number of hours per month (e.g. Republic of Korea).

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

Reconciling work with family responsibilities has long been on the table as a key barrier for parents in general and for women in particular to prepare for, enter, remain, re-enter and advance in the world of work. G20 countries have in recent years adopted gradual but transformative measures in this area and are developing new indicators to specifically monitor work-life balance. As seen last year, expanding investments in childcare infrastructures and provisions are part of the national agenda of a number of countries (e.g. Australia, France, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia or Turkey). Australia has recently introduced a new childcare subsidy to assist families with their childcare fees. It is estimated that this measure will allow 230,000 families to join the labour market as a result of this new measure.

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. United Kingdom); childcare allowances for the unemployed or informal workers and childcare in the workplace (e.g. Argentina) and tax deductions for companies with collective bargaining agreements (e.g. Italy). While overall emphasis is on provision of childcare, there are new elements (e.g. France, Japan) that indicate the importance of quality childcare through improving working conditions of care workers.

Similarly, a great deal of law and policy reforms are under way in a number of countries in the area of maternity, paternity and parental leave and additional measures to meet the needs of working parents and workers with care responsibilities. Extension of paternity leave is under discussion in Spain,<sup>2</sup> while the duration of maternity leave has been prolonged in India. Shared parental leave has been provided

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<sup>2</sup> Currently under discussion.

for in the United Kingdom. Increasingly, collective bargaining agreements included 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). Monitoring of working conditions is more rigorous through improved gender-responsive labour inspections systems (e.g. Mexico, Russian Federation and Spain). Of interest, both France and the Republic of Korea have strengthened their labour inspections systems to specifically ensure compliance with maternity and paternity protection.

Finally, a number of G20 countries are taking additional measures to combat violence and harassment against women that limit women's equal opportunities at work and undermine their dignity and productivity. 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 include women subject to harassment in the workplace as a result of pregnancy, childbirth or childcare leave (e.g. Japan). Argentina has enacted new regulations to govern leave resulting from gender-based violence. 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.

Employers that promote social dialogue on discrimination and violence in their companies are recognized by their government with the "Equality Label" (e.g. France). Gender-based violence is also included in labour inspections practices (e.g. Mexico).

## 2. Conclusions and recommendations

Policy priorities are diverse across the G20 countries, as they reflect differences in national economic and labour market structures and cultural and regulatory frameworks. However, overall reforms are ongoing to improve the quality of women's earnings or to make it easier for working mothers and fathers to reconcile work and family. There is a general commitment to fast-track initiatives, and interventions, initially conceived as pilot, have been scaled-up either to reach a larger number of beneficiaries or to become institutionalized programmes.

There is also convergence in some G20 countries towards bringing together policies covering different but complementary areas, such as education, vocational training, and childcare services, with strategic inclusive targeting and a more rigorous monitoring system. Establishing numerical targets and putting in place the necessary mechanisms to measure progress and impact will accelerate the achievement of the 25x25 target and advance the SDGs 8 and 5. For this, it is necessary that all G20 countries collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data.

All G20 countries are pursuing a more inclusive approach towards women at work, with targeted programmes for those women who are either outside the labour market or face barriers to re-enter it after periods of absence from work. There is also a greater understanding of the need to embrace a life-cycle lens to achieving gender equality at work. Increased investments in childcare are evident in many G20 countries and a growing number of countries are providing a wider range of options and services to women who interrupt their career for reasons related to care. A general push towards a more balanced share of care responsibilities between women and men is also observed.

Social dialogue and collective bargaining, as is the case in several G20 countries, are effective means to improve legislation on equal opportunities and overall working conditions. More efforts in this direction could accelerate progress towards achieving the 25x25 target.

Further attention is needed to ensure that changing demographic patterns, increased care needs and a world of work that is rapidly changing are addressed as a coherent policy package. Elements of this are already in place in a number of G20 countries but they either need to be scaled up or they need to be introduced and consolidated in an integrated manner. An effective monitoring system with impact measurement is key to identifying transformative and successful pilot interventions and magnifying their impact.

The future of work will require a much more flexible approach to skills development and upgrading, in which all workers at all times will be able to acquire new skills and adapt to the changing needs of the labour market. A lifelong learning approach is of the essence for all workers and for women in particular. Efforts in this direction need to be strengthened in all G20 countries, accompanied by a more flexible approach to care responsibilities and care needs. A continuum of interventions should be put in place so that women are not penalized for taking care of children or elderly relatives while encouraging men to partake. For this to materialize, it is essential to pursue a more flexible approach towards a gender inclusive lifelong skills development. This needs to be anchored in policy interventions aimed at enabling workers of both genders to benefit from it through also a more balanced division of labour with regard to care responsibilities.

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. This would imply valuing and professionalizing jobs in sectors that are traditionally female dominated, thus providing better working conditions. To this effect, increased awareness raising and elimination of gender stereotypes through education would certainly help as it is already the case in some countries.

The quality of information provided through the new templates is richer compared to the past. A number of country templates not only highlight the type of measures adopted under the four major areas, namely increasing women's labour participation rate; improving the quality of women's earnings; increasing labour market security and achieving better working conditions, they also provide greater details in respect of coverage, the corresponding funding and, sometimes, their impact.





## Annex D

### **Policy priorities for boosting female participation, quality of employment and gender equity**

Reducing gender gaps, and improving female economic participation and access for women to productive, high quality employment will support stronger and more inclusive economic growth across G20 countries. Female labour force participation rates are significantly lower than those among men in many G20 economies, suggesting a potential for an improvement in labour supply that can mitigate the effects of a shrinking workforce, help to relieve supply constraints and contribute to growth. For the G20 as a whole, participation for the age group 15 to 64 is currently around 83 per cent for men and 57 per cent for women.

Analysis by the international organisations demonstrates the substantial economic and social benefits of increasing female labour force participation and improving the quality of female employment.

Nations are making progress in addressing gender inequity, including through educational attainment and improving the quality of female employment, but significant challenges and opportunities remain. For example, women continue to be overrepresented in low quality and low wage jobs.

G20 members agree to implement measures across a range of key policy areas to boost female workforce participation, subject to national circumstances, including to:

1. Support lifelong access to education and training, matched with the needs of business and communities
2. Provide access to affordable and quality child care, paid parental leave, family-friendly work opportunities and conditions, and support for elderly care
3. Support women to pursue self-employment and become entrepreneurs, including through equal property rights, improved financial literacy, access to financial markets and advisory services
4. Widen access to services for women (in the formal or informal economies) in order to support their employment prospects and mobility, including tailored employment services, active labour market programmes and skills development opportunities
5. Address legal, regulatory, cultural and behavioural barriers to employment opportunities for women
6. Promote non-discriminatory practices at the workplace, including on pay and career progression
7. Extend social protections, especially to those in poor households or those working in the informal economy, including in regard to work safety, health services, pensions and income security
8. Improve work incentives, income support, other transfer payments and related forms of social security
9. Enhance the female share of executive positions in the public and private sectors
10. Work with social partners to develop new employment opportunities for women
11. Collect and report timely data related to gender.

These priorities are informed by ILO conventions and recommendations on equality of opportunity and treatment and the OECD Gender Recommendation.

## 4. Template

### MONITORING PROGRESS ON THE BRISBANE GENDER TARGET AND THE JOB QUALITY

*Monitoring progress: tracking policy developments*

Using the template below, please report on the key policy measures that have been or are planned to be put in place by your country to achieve the collective target of reducing the gender gap in labour force participation in 2012 by 25% by 2025 and to improve women's job quality.

The policy measures (up to four measures in each case) should be grouped under each of the categories mentioned below including the three quality dimensions of the **G20 Job Quality Framework** and the respective **policy priorities** set out by **G20 Ministers of Labour and Employment in their Melbourne Declaration (Annex D)**:

- I. Overarching measures to increase women's participation in the labour market (including policy priorities 5 and 10).
- II. Measures to improve the quality of women's earnings (including policy priorities 1, 3, 6 and 9).
- III. Measures to improve women's labour market security (including policy priorities 3, 4, 7 and 8).
- IV. Measures to improve working conditions (including policy priorities 2 and 6).

I. Overarching measures to increase women's participation in the labour market (including policy priorities 5 and 10):				
<i>Please report e.g. on measures addressing cultural and behavioural barriers to employment opportunities for women, on cooperation with social partners to develop new employment opportunities for women etc.</i>				
	Policy instrument 1	Policy instrument 2	Policy instrument 3	Policy instrument 4
Name/Title				
Objective				
Eligibility criteria				
Type of support provided				
Duration of entitlements				
Date of introduction and implementation timeline				
Overall spending				
Coverage (number of persons affected)				
Outcomes achieved to date				

II. Measures to improve the quality of women's earnings (including policy priorities 1, 3, 6 and 9):				
<i>Please report on measures which contribute to improving the level and distribution of women's earnings and improve women's earning capacity, e.g. through lifelong learning and skills development</i>				
	Policy instrument 1	Policy instrument 2	Policy instrument 3	Policy instrument 4
Name/Title				
Objective				
Eligibility criteria				
Type of support provided				
Duration of entitlements				
Date of introduction and implementation timeline				
Overall spending				
Coverage (number of persons affected)				
Outcomes achieved to date				

III. Measures to improve women's labour market security (including policy priorities 3, 4, 7 and 8):				
<i>Please report on measures which contribute to tackling the high share of women in informal, low-pay and non-standard forms of employment</i>				
	Policy instrument 1	Policy instrument 2	Policy instrument 3	Policy instrument 4
Name/Title				
Objective				
Eligibility criteria				
Type of support provided				
Duration of entitlements				
Date of introduction and implementation timeline				
Overall spending				
Coverage (number of persons affected)				
Outcomes achieved to date				

**IV. Measures to improve working conditions (including policy priorities 2 and 6):**

*Please report on measures which shape working conditions and the work environment so as to enable and incentivize men and women to reconcile work and family and to equitably share family responsibilities*

	Policy instrument 1	Policy instrument 2	Policy instrument 3	Policy instrument 4
<b>Name/Title</b>				
<b>Objective</b>				
<b>Eligibility criteria</b>				
<b>Type of support provided</b>				
<b>Duration of entitlements</b>				
<b>Date of introduction and implementation timeline</b>				
<b>Overall spending</b>				
<b>Coverage (number of persons affected)</b>				
<b>Outcomes achieved to date</b>				

: If less than 4 policy instruments are in place for a given area, please leave the corresponding table blank.