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GENDER GAPS IN EDUCATION

Evidence from the OECD

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- Evidence from Education at a Glance, PISA and the OECD Gender Initiative
- What are the main gender differences in education?
- Where does Belgium stand among OECD countries?

Almost no gender gaps in upper secondary education attainment...

Population aged 25-34 who has attained at least upper secondary education Percentage by gender, 2010







Source: OECD Education database

- 1. Year of reference 2005 instead of 2000.
- 2. Year of reference 2006 instead of 2000.

Prevalent women advantage in entry into tertiary education...



Source: OECD Education database

But biggest gender differences are in the choice of field of education

Percentage of tertiary degrees awarded to women, by field of education (2009)



1. Year of reference 2008.

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• Could differences in field of study be explained by performance in school in corresponding subjects?









The gender gap in mathematics at age 15

Mean score on the mathematics scale 2009





Mean score on the sciences scale 2009

Boys A Girls - All students



Field of study and performance

- Students' attitudes towards subjects play important role in shaping gender differences in academic performances
- In mathematics, girls rate their own ability lower than boys as early as the first year of primary school, even when actual performance does not differ.
- Gender disparities in subjects chosen in higher education relate more to student attitudes (e.g. motivation, interest) than to ability and performance at school.

The gender gap in motivation



Proportion of boys and girls planning a career in engineering or computing



Source: PISA 2006

35

Proportion of boys and girls planning a career in health services



Source: PISA 2006

Men and women graduating in same subjects often make different occupational choices

Distribution of graduates working as professionals and technicians by field of study and occupation, OECD-14, 2005





- Gender stereotypical attitudes towards subjects and occupations are reinforced by the *composition of the teaching staff*.
- Today teaching is predominantly a female occupation (save for education management), especially at the lower levels of education



Women dominate the teaching profession up to secondary education

Percentage of women among teaching staff in public and private institutions by level of education





- Policy decisions should aim at encouraging talented girls to study mathematics and science at the most advanced levels.
- Policies aiming at helping boys to acquire reading skills are needed.
- Achievement-focused policies will not change the relative disadvantage of women in labour markets.
- School level policies aimed at attracting girls to mathematics and science as future career options.
- To be effective, policies to address stereotyping in education should be complemented by more general efforts to combat gender stereotyping in social, cultural and economic factors...



- It pays to have highly qualified teachers who address gender-specific attitudes within the classroom.
- Teacher-training programmes for graduates have proven to be effective.
- Valuable additions could be gender awareness courses
- Attitudes are formed early in life, so start early
- Change in non-monetary of STEM occupations may also attract characteristics more women to these fields.



Gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship

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PISA at OECD <u>www.pisa.oecd.org</u> email: <u>Francesca.Borgonovi@OECD.org</u>

Education at a Glance

www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012 email: <u>Eric.Charbonnier@oecd.org</u>

For more data and policies on gender gaps in education...

Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now!

Publication to be released on 17 December 2012

<u>www.oecd.org/gender</u> email: <u>Angelica.SALVIDELPERO@OECD.org</u>

THANK YOU