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Women in teaching

Understanding the gender dimension

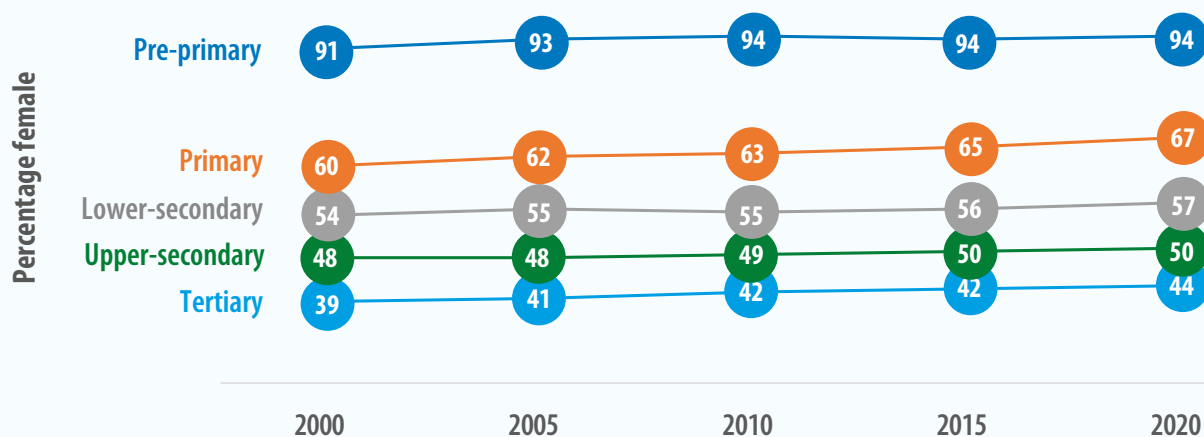
Gender equality for teachers and representation that reflects the diversity of classrooms and communities are key to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. To commemorate International Women's Day, this fact sheet spotlights the participation of women in the global education workforce. It shows that women are increasingly participating in the teaching profession but that they are less likely to participate in higher levels of education, especially tertiary education and positions of school leadership. Moreover, gender gaps remain unfavourable for women in many developing and low-income contexts. Nevertheless, there are a number of measures policy-makers can employ to improve gender equality in and through teacher workforces around the world.

How does women's participation in the global teaching workforce vary by level and how has it changed over time?

Women's participation in teaching decreases relatively from lower to higher levels of education. In 2020, they represented the majority of teachers in pre-primary (94 per cent), primary (67 per cent) and lower-secondary (57 per cent) levels compared to half in upper-secondary education (50 per cent). The only level where women's participation lags behind men, globally, is the tertiary sector where 44 per cent were female.

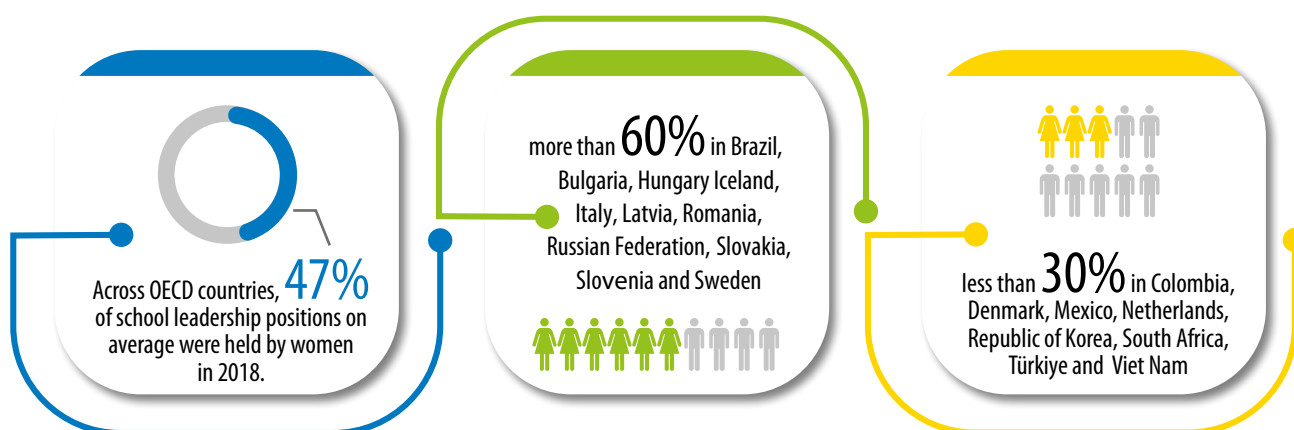
The expansion of primary education during the last 20 years was largely supported by the recruitment of female teachers. While the global primary net enrolment rate in primary education increased from 85 to 91 per cent during this period, the percentage of females teachers increased from 60 to 67 per cent, which is greater than in other levels. While more progress is needed, women also made modest gains in tertiary education where female participation increased from 39 to 44 per cent.

Figure 1: Percentage of global female teachers by educational level, 2000-2020



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023.

To what extent do women participate in school leadership?



Source: TALIS data 2018 (OECD, 2019). <https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/>

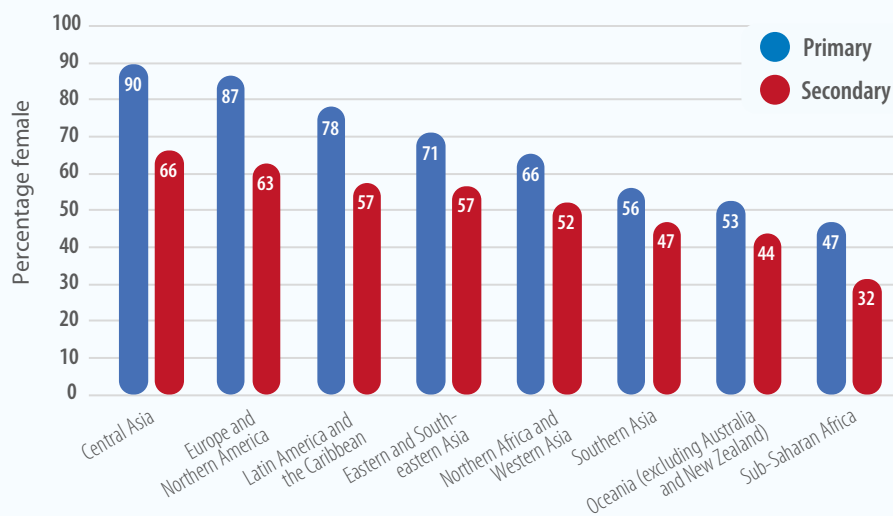
Women’s representation in teaching workforces varies among countries

In 2020, women comprised the majority of total primary teachers in Central Asia (90 per cent), Europe and Northern America (87 per cent) and in Latin America and the Caribbean (78 per cent); women comprised the smallest proportion in sub-Saharan Africa (47 per cent).

Women were less likely to comprise the majority of teacher workforces in secondary education; fewer than half of secondary teachers were female in Southern Asia (47 per cent); Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand (44 per cent) and were least likely in sub-Saharan Africa (32 per cent).

The participation rate of women teachers in primary education grew the most in Southern Asia from 38 per cent in 2000 to 56 per cent in 2020. This is followed by Northern Africa from 49 to 65 per cent.

Figure 2: Percentage of female primary and secondary teachers by region, 2020



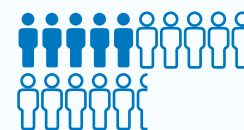
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023.

Additional teachers needed to meet universal primary and secondary education by 2030

Women’s participation in teaching is lowest in regions with the greatest teacher needs.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383002>

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



16.5 MILLION

SOUTHERN ASIA



7 MILLION

Table 1: Countries where females make up fewer than half of the primary teacher workforce, 2021 or most recent data available

Region	40 – 49 per cent	30 – 39 per cent	30 per cent or less
Arab States	...	Yemen	...
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	Bhutan, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste
Oceania	Solomon Islands
Southern Asia	...	Afghanistan	...
Sub-Saharan Africa	Angola, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, U.R. Tanzania	Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone	Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Liberia, Togo

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023.

What measures can education systems use to promote gender equality within and through the teacher workforce?

Ensure greater female enrolment and completion of secondary education in preparation for entering teacher training programmes. In 2020, just 39% of girls were enrolled in upper secondary education compared to 46% of boys in sub-Saharan Africa; in Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) 50 per cent of girls were enrolled compared to 55 per cent of boys.

Counter gender stereotypes and social bias concerning whose responsibility is the care and education of children; and encourage more males through targeted outreach to enter pre-primary and primary teaching, particularly in higher-income countries where they are under-represented.

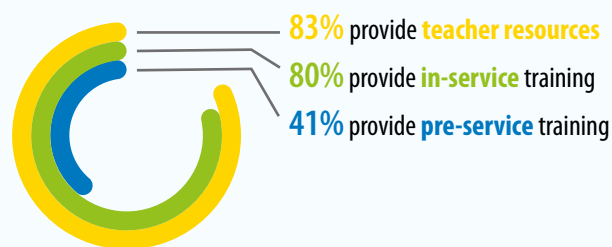
In low-income countries, scholarships to support females entering and remaining in teacher training programmes can increase the percentage of qualified female teachers as well as increase awareness around the need to enhance female representation (CODE, 2023).

Create incentives and programmes to ensure more females teach in rural and remote areas, such as providing housing allowances, prizes, stipends, and emphasizing local recruitment and in-service training.

Provide training on gender equality, gender transformative pedagogies and preventing all forms of gender-based violence to all teachers, school leaders and district officials and across both teacher and student curricula.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), which is a curriculum-based approach that implicitly includes a better understanding of gender and related norms, rights, equity and combatting negative stereotypes and traditional perceptions of gender roles (UNESCO, 2023), is key to promote gender equality and attract more females. Recent data from PEER profiles show that among 50 countries analysed:

Percentage of countries providing teachers with resources and training on CSE



Source: UNESCO, 2023 - Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER) on CSE. See education-profiles.org

Teacher education institutions and district offices can support female teachers to advance into leadership positions by targeting them during pre-service and in-service training to build leadership competencies and skills.

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 teacherstaskforce@unesco.org

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