COMMITTEE: Gender Equality

RESEARCH QUESTION: To what extent can governments address the structural inequalities that limit women's and girls' access to digital skills and STEM fields while promoting innovation and economic growth?

CHAIRS: Paakwasi TAYLOR, Agnieska DROZD, and Thomas PIOTTE

PRESENTATION OF THE CHAIR



Hello delegates, my name is Paakwasi TAYLOR, and I will be one of your presidents in this committee.

I was born in Ghana, live in France, and attend Ferney-Voltaire High School. I have been participating in MUN since 2024 and have attended the FerMUN and ClerMUN conferences as a delegate. I enjoy football, music, and playing the guitar.

This year, we will focus on an issue that shapes the future of global innovation: gender equality in access to digital skills. It is essential to find solutions to this issue, which is becoming more pressing every day as the world becomes increasingly digitalized. Our committee will debate an issue that challenges the ability of governments to combat the structural inequalities that limit women's and girls' access to STEM fields. It is up to us to ensure that women are not left behind.

I encourage you to find concrete solutions that promote equal access to digital skills and STEM fields.

KEYWORDS

Structural inequalities: Persistent disparities between social groups resulting from the organization of institutions, social norms, and public policies. Unlike cyclical inequalities, which refer to temporary economic or social disparities caused by the current economic situation, structural inequalities are perpetuated from generation to generation as long as the structures that create them remain unchallenged.

Digital skills: The set of abilities required to use, understand, and create digital technologies, ranging from using a computer to mastering programming, data analysis, or cybersecurity.

STEM fields: An acronym referring to fields of study and professions in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

Innovation: The process by which a new idea, technology, or method is developed and then implemented to create economic or social value. In the digital context, innovation depends directly on the diversity of the profiles involved in the design of technologies.

Economic growth: A sustainable increase in a country's wealth production, measured by changes in gross domestic product (GDP), which is calculated as the sum of a country's value added over a one-year period. International organizations, including the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), view the digital inclusion of women as a direct driver of growth, given the untapped economic potential represented by their underrepresentation in STEM fields.

Gender digital divide: The gap between men and women in terms of access to, use of, and mastery of digital technologies.

GLOBAL OVERVIEW

1. The Gender Digital Divide: Access Remains Unequal

Despite steady progress in global connectivity, the gap between men and women in Internet access remains significant. According to the ITU, 77% of men use the Internet, compared to 71% of women, and approximately 280 million more men than women were connected in 2025. Even more concerning, ITU figures indicate that the global parity score, set at 0.92 in 2025, remained exactly the same as in 2019, a sign of complete stagnation over six years[1].

This gap varies significantly by region. According to an ITU report, parity has already been achieved in Europe, the Americas, and the CIS region, while Africa—despite showing marked improvement—remains the continent lagging the farthest behind (its parity score having risen from 0.70 to 0.78 over six years). The situation is even more critical in low-income countries, where only 18% of women are online, compared with 29% of men[1].

2. Underrepresentation in STEM Fields

The gap widens further at the higher education level. UNESCO notes that women account for only 28% of STEM graduates worldwide, a figure that has remained unchanged for the past ten years. The disparity is even more striking, as only 15% of young women earn STEM degrees, compared to 35% of young men.

Globally, women account for 57% of graduates in the natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics, but only 32% in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) fields, as revealed by UNESCO statistics. In other words, women are not shunning the sciences in general, but specifically the technology and engineering fields most closely linked to digital technology.

3. A Gap That Persists in the Workplace

This educational imbalance has a direct impact on employment. The World Economic Forum estimated that women accounted for only 28.2% of the global STEM in 2024, compared to 47.3% in non-STEM sectors[2]. UNESCO also notes that only one in three researchers worldwide is a woman.

(Chart showing STEM graduates by country and gender, 2023)

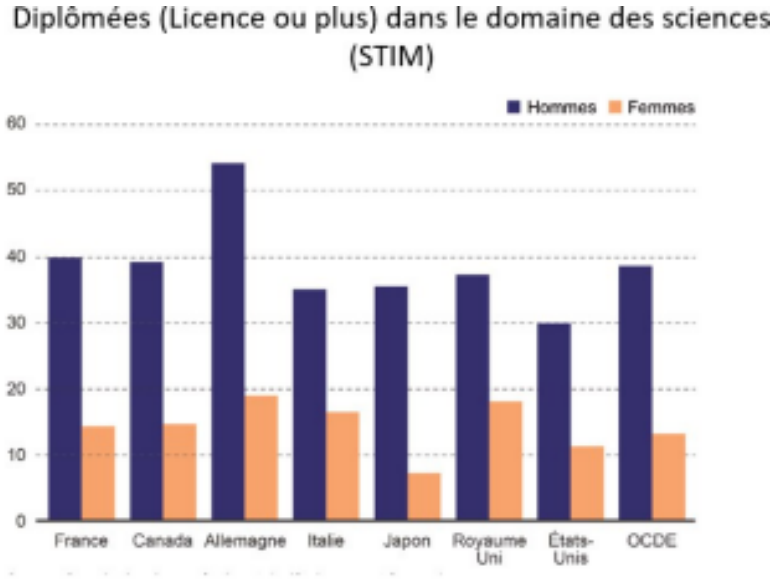


Figure 1. Part des diplômés universitaires (licence ou niveau supérieur) dans les domaines des Sciences, technologies, ingénieries et mathématiques - STIM (en %) en 2023 dans plusieurs pays de l'OCDE, cas des hommes et des femmes. Source : FMI[1].

4. Structural Causes

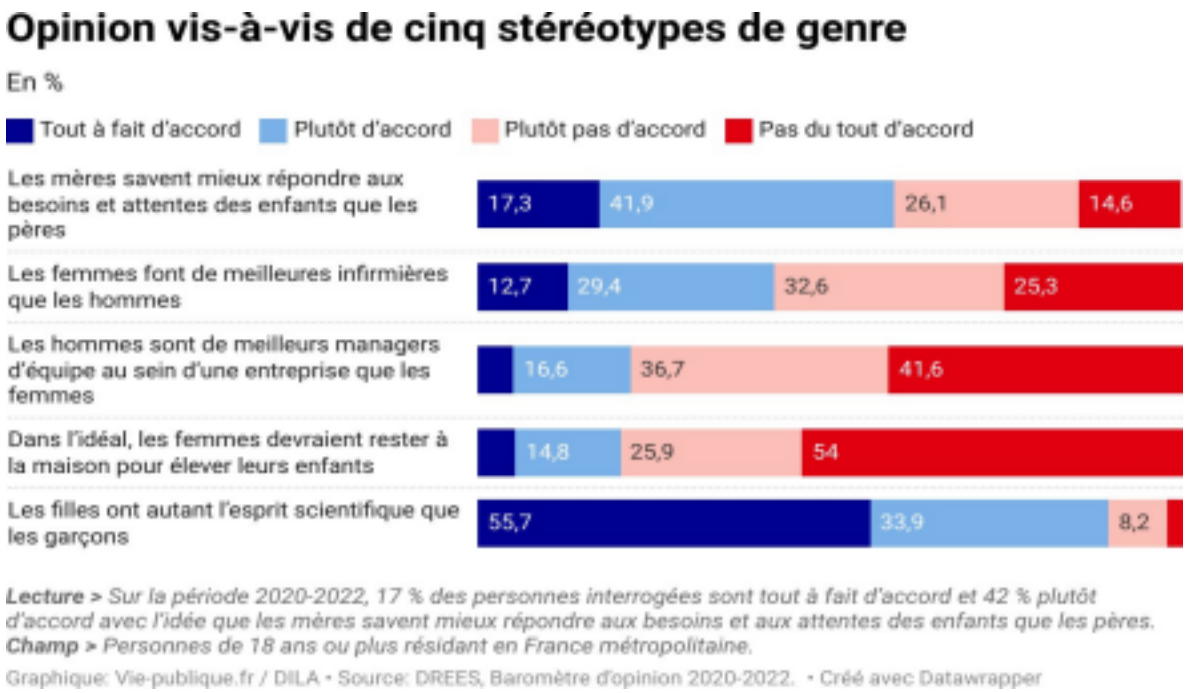
Several structural factors explain this persistence:

The low representation of women in certain science and technology fields and in leadership positions reduces the visibility of career paths with which young girls can identify.

While not necessarily intentional, certain differing expectations for girls and boys can reinforce stereotypes and influence students' confidence in their abilities.

Even when their academic performance is strong, girls remain underrepresented in certain science and technology fields. Career choices are therefore also linked to social perceptions and expectations surrounding these fields.

Wage gaps, differing career advancement opportunities, and the underrepresentation of women in certain professions can reinforce the idea that these sectors offer fewer prospects for women.



(Opinions on 5 gender stereotypes in metropolitan France, 2020)

5. The Economic Challenge: Why the Underrepresentation of Women in STEM Fields Holds Back Innovation and Economic Growth

According to the ITU, approximately 2.6 billion[3] people worldwide still lack access to the Internet. Women and girls are particularly affected by this situation. This creates a real inequality, because without digital access, it is more difficult to pursue education, acquire certain skills, and access career opportunities.

This situation also has consequences for businesses. In sectors such as engineering and digital technologies, companies need qualified people, but a portion of the talent pool remains underrepresented in these fields. Providing more opportunities for women would therefore lead to a greater diversity of profiles and bring new ideas into teams.

But the issue extends beyond employment. According to the World Bank, reducing gender inequalities in the workforce and entrepreneurship could increase GDP by 20 percent[4]. For women, greater access to STEM fields can therefore mean more opportunities to find employment, advance their careers, and become more financially independent.

Ultimately, reducing inequalities in STEM is important for both women and the economy. By enabling more women to enter these fields, we can make better use of available skills, create new opportunities, and foster growth.

CONVENTIONS AND MAJOR EVENTS

CEDAW—Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)

Adopted on December 18, 1979, by the United Nations General Assembly and entered into force in 1981, CEDAW is one of the main international frameworks for combating discrimination against women. Although the text does not directly address digital issues, it tackles areas that are essential for reducing the gender digital divide, including education, employment, and equal opportunity. It thus enables us to view inequalities in access to technology not merely as a technical problem but as a broader consequence of structural discrimination.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

Adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Beijing Declaration marks an important milestone in the recognition of women's rights as an integral part of human rights. It also emphasizes the importance of women's access to the media, information, and new technologies. For our topic, it is particularly important because it shows that the issue of women's access to technology is not new: as early as the 1990s, the international community had already identified new technologies as an essential means of education, empowerment, and participation in society.

EQUALS Global Partnership (2016)

Created in 2016 by the ITU, the United Nations University, UN Women, the International Trade Center, and the GSMA, EQUALS brings together public, private, and international stakeholders to bridge the digital divide between women and men. The partnership focuses in particular on access to technology, the development of digital skills, and the representation of women in technology sectors and decision-making positions. Its approach is noteworthy because it goes beyond simply providing access to digital tools, it also seeks to empower women to become active participants and leaders in the digital economy.

ITU Connect Agenda 2030 – Goal 2 (2018)

The ITU has incorporated the reduction of the gender digital divide into its international

agenda, including specific targets related to internet access and mobile phone ownership. The goal is to advance digital equality by 2030. This initiative demonstrates that access to technology remains a measurable issue on a global scale and that it is necessary to track the gaps between women and men in order to implement appropriate policies.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 - 2030 Agenda (2015)

SDG 4 aims to ensure quality education accessible to all and to promote equal opportunities in learning. It is directly related to our topic because education plays a vital role in reducing the digital divide: without access to quality training and digital skills, mere physical access to the Internet or devices is not enough. Developing scientific, technical, and digital skills can also help encourage more girls to pursue STEM fields and reduce the stereotypes that still limit their participation in these areas.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 – 2030 Agenda (2015)

SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In particular, it recognizes the importance of technology and ICTs in promoting this empowerment. In the context of the digital divide, this goal thus links access to technology, education, economic independence, and women's participation in society. It also underscores that bridging the digital divide involves more than just providing equipment: it also requires addressing the social barriers and stereotypes that prevent some women and girls from fully taking advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Discovery Days: Organize events where local tech companies open their doors to groups of middle and high school girls to give them a hands-on introduction to careers in the digital sector and educate them on these topics; furthermore, scholarships could be made available to those who need them.

Coding clubs and after-school workshops for girls: Organize, at the local or community level, programming clubs or hands-on workshops exclusively for girls, outside the traditional school setting.

Mentoring programs and visible female role models: Establish programs that connect young girls with female professionals in STEM fields; initiatives such as UNESCO's[5] STEM Clinics in Ghana demonstrate that this type of program tangibly increases girls' interest in these fields.

Online communities and peer support forums for girls: Create and support online communities where girls and young women interested in digital technology can ask questions, share their projects, and support one another as peers, without relying on an institutional framework.

Media and social media representation campaigns: Fund or support campaigns that highlight women in the digital sector to change the cultural perception of digital careers among young girls and those around them.

GUIDED QUESTIONS

1. Conduct an assessment of your country to identify which policies have been implemented or are being considered to promote the inclusion of women in STEM fields.

2. If nothing changes, what might be the concrete consequences, in 10 or 20 years, of a digital and technological world designed primarily by men?

3. How can governments, businesses, and educational institutions take action to reduce gender inequalities in access to digital fields and careers?

4. To what extent can education from an early age influence girls' participation in science and technology fields (ICT, engineering, AI, etc.)?

5. Should policies aimed at increasing women's presence in the digital sector prioritize equal opportunity or seek to achieve gender parity?

6. Are digital inequalities between men and women caused more by a lack of physical access, or by cultural and social barriers once access has been obtained?

7. How can labor unions promote greater participation by women without creating new forms of inequality?

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