



ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC: ABAC EQUAL PAY FRAMEWORK

Final report on the ABAC Equal Pay Framework

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Foreword



As we navigate the ongoing transformation of global economies, the persistent gap between women's and men's pay remains one of the clearest markers of inequality. It is a symptom of structural barriers and unequal power dynamics that continue to shape our workplaces, institutions, and economies.

Across the Asia-Pacific, the pace of progress in closing gender pay gaps has been uneven and, in some places, has stagnated.

Without deliberate action, there is a real risk that inequality will deepen, undermining our shared goals of inclusive growth, innovation, and resilience. Pay gaps do not emerge in isolation, they reflect broader issues in hiring, promotion, caregiving responsibilities, workforce participation, and access to leadership. They also suppress productivity and talent pipelines, especially in high-growth sectors.

This report represents a bold step forward by ABAC. It sets out a practical framework to help businesses voluntarily measure, report, and take action to close employer-level gender pay gaps. It builds on growing momentum across APEC economies and is grounded in the belief that business, not just government, must be agents of change.

When women are paid fairly, businesses thrive. They attract and retain top talent, build stronger reputations, are more profitable and improve decision-making. Transparent pay practices are not just a matter of compliance or good governance; they are a competitive advantage.

This framework is not a destination - it is a mechanism. One that can help businesses confront the discomfort of inequality with clarity, structure, and purpose. It is designed for those who are ready to lead, not because they must, but because they understand that gender equality is not just a moral imperative, but a business one. ABAC has laid down the challenge. Now we invite business to step up, adapt, and build what comes next.

As the APEC Business Advisory Council, you are uniquely positioned to champion private-sector action on pay equity that complements government reform and advances regional economic resilience – working as a convening body for businesses and bridging diverse regulatory environments across APEC economies. Through voluntary GPG reporting frameworks, toolkits on best practices, expert communities of practice and a strong alignment with the APEC Gender Equality Structural Reform Principles, ABAC can catalyse meaningful change. Embracing transparency, data-driven insights, and sustained public-private collaboration will empower women, drive profitability, and foster a more inclusive future for all.

We know that closing the gender pay gap will not happen by chance, nor good intentions. It requires commitment, evidence, and a clear strategy enacted by business across our region. This report provides that foundation. It is both a call to action and a roadmap for reform. Let us seize this opportunity, not just to improve pay equity, but to redefine what leadership looks like across the Asia-Pacific region and take our place as a global leader in gender equality.

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Executive Summary

This final report presents the ABAC Equal Pay Framework: a voluntary, business-led mechanism to support businesses in identifying, measuring and closing gender pay gaps across APEC economies. Grounded in structural reform principles and designed with business practicality in mind, the Framework supports enterprises, particularly micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs), to measure, interpret and act on wage gaps within their workforces. It reflects a growing recognition across the region that equitable pay is both an economic necessity and a strategic imperative. The Framework has been developed through a robust process of consultation, regional analysis and alignment with international good practice.

Designed with scalability in mind, it offers flexible entry points for businesses of different sizes and sectors, ensuring that participation is both feasible and impactful. It integrates key principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity while remaining practical for business.

The framework is:

- **Voluntary and modular:** tailored to business size, capability and context
- **Data-driven and business-aligned:** grounded in economic rationale and ESG alignment
- **Regionally coherent:** enabling comparability and coordination across APEC economies

Key features include:

- A four-tiered participation model to support MSMEs and large businesses
- Practical and harmonised methods for calculating gender pay gaps (e.g. median and bonus gaps)
- Templates and guidance to support diagnostics, action planning, and reporting
- Alignment with trade, investment and sustainability reporting expectations

This Framework is designed to support voluntary uptake by businesses of all sizes, with tailored tools and scalable modules that reflect local regulatory contexts and enterprise capacity. It provides simple diagnostic methods, illustrative benchmarks, and optional reporting formats to help firms track progress and align with good practice.

Grounded in global evidence and informed by best-in-class modelling, the Framework demonstrates the significant economic gains available through wage equity. Conservative estimates suggest that even **modest participation rates among MSMEs could generate APEC-wide GDP gains of up to USD\$82.85 billion annually.**

Integration into APEC's structural reform agenda will help accelerate uptake, provide economies with flexible implementation options, and align this initiative with broader regional priorities.

This report sets out the rationale, design, implementation roadmap, and evaluation approach for the Equal Pay Framework, offering a critical tool to close gender pay gaps, lift economic performance, and ensure shared prosperity across the region.

Recommendations

That ABAC:

1. **Adopt the Equal Pay Framework as a regionally endorsed voluntary standard** to guide consistent, credible, and coordinated action on employer-level gender pay gaps across APEC economies.
2. **Embed gender pay transparency into structural reform efforts, economic inclusion policies, and trade-related initiatives across APEC fora** to ensure alignment with broader goals of resilient, sustainable, and inclusive growth.
3. **Reinforce the compelling business and economic case**, noting even modest adoption of equal pay measures by MSMEs could conservatively boost APEC GDP by up to \$82.85 billion which highlights equal pay as a low-cost, high-impact lever for productivity, competitiveness, and inclusive growth.
4. **Accelerate phase two Toolkit development, pilot roll-out, and MSME engagement**, recognising that a framework alone will not close the gender pay gap.
5. **Champion the inclusion of voluntary equal pay data to strengthen the APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard** by encouraging the development of a voluntary reporting stream where businesses can submit de-identified gender pay gap data using the framework and online tool.

Introduction and context

Gender inequality remains a persistent challenge in the Asia-Pacific, with the gender pay gap standing out as a critical barrier to women's full economic participation. No economy in the world has achieved complete gender parity, and across APEC economies women continue to earn significantly less than men on average. The gender pay gap – typically around 20% globally – represents systemic disparities in earnings between men and women. This gap not only undermines fairness and social justice; it also constrains economic growth, productivity, and competitiveness. In fact, leaders have noted that failing to address gender inequality is equivalent to choosing suboptimal economic outcomes.

Within APEC's agenda, women's economic empowerment is recognised as central to achieving inclusive growth and shared prosperity. The APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 and the La Serena Roadmap for Women and Inclusive Growth (2019–2030) commit members to removing barriers to women's participation in the economy. In recent years, however, progress in areas such as closing the gender pay gap has been disappointingly slow. This reality has spurred calls for more concrete, actionable measures. APEC's Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE) and business stakeholders alike have advocated mainstreaming gender equality across all economic initiatives.

It is against this backdrop that the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), the official voice of the private sector in APEC, has taken up the issue of equal pay. ABAC's theme for 2025, "Bridge. Business. Beyond.", emphasises bridging divides and ensuring prosperity is shared by all. In its letter to APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade (MRT) in 2025, ABAC highlighted "dismantling structural impediments to inclusion, including gender pay gaps" as a priority alongside trade resilience, digital transformation, green growth, and health security. ABAC recognises that empowering women in the economy is not a stand-alone objective but a cross-cutting driver of innovation, resilience, and sustainability in the region.

The ABAC Equal Pay Framework was developed as a flagship initiative to advance gender pay equity in APEC. This voluntary framework and toolkit aims to help businesses, especially MSMEs, measure their own gender pay gaps and take informed action to close them. By providing a standardised yet flexible approach, the framework seeks to overcome the current patchwork of efforts, where few APEC economies mandate pay gap reporting or remedial plans. Greater transparency and accountability in pay will spur change. Ultimately, the goal is to equip the private sector with practical tools to close gender pay gaps, thereby improving talent utilization and productivity, and enabling the Asia-Pacific to fully leverage its human capital for economic growth.

This report presents a comprehensive overview of the framework and its significance. It details the consultative development process, the components of the framework (methodology, calculator tool, reporting standards), and strategies for region-wide implementation. It also quantifies the economic benefits of closing the gender pay gap and illustrates how this initiative supports APEC's broader priorities in trade, digital economy, healthcare, and green growth. The report concludes with

practical recommendations and next steps to ensure the framework's success, from ministerial endorsement to incentives and monitoring mechanisms.

By placing evidence and action at the forefront, ABAC's Equal Pay Framework exemplifies the kind of public-private partnership needed to achieve APEC's vision of inclusive, sustainable prosperity. The message is clear: advancing gender equality, particularly equal pay, is indispensable to building a dynamic and resilient Asia-Pacific economy. The following sections provide a deep dive into how this framework was developed, what it entails, and how it can be implemented for maximum impact.

Economic benefits of closing the gender pay gap

Closing the gender pay gap is often seen through the lens of equity and fairness, but it is equally an economic imperative. A growing body of research and economic evidence demonstrates that gender pay equity can significantly boost economic performance, both at the macro level (GDP and productivity) and the micro level (company profitability and MSME growth). Quantifying these benefits reinforces why initiatives like the ABAC Equal Pay Framework are investments in economic prosperity.

Macroeconomic Gains: GDP and Growth

The **Asia-Pacific region stands to gain tremendously** by harnessing the full economic potential of women. When women participate in the economy on equal terms as men – including equal pay, equal workforce participation, and equal advancement opportunities – the effect on GDP is dramatic.

- **Global and Regional GDP Impact:** A often-cited analysis by McKinsey Global Institute found that closing the global gender gap in labour force participation and other key factors could add \$28 trillion to global annual GDP by 2025 (compared to a business-as-usual scenario). For the Asia-Pacific alone, this translates to about \$17 trillion of additional GDP – a 70% share of the global opportunity, reflecting the size and untapped potential of women in this region. This figure takes into account more women working, in better jobs, and being paid more equitably. It underscores that we are currently leaving enormous wealth on the table. In fact, it equates to \$46 billion of lost output every day that we delay closing gender gaps.
- **Effect of Wage Parity:** Narrowing specifically the gender pay gap (even without full parity in employment rates) would also have a significant effect. Achieving pay parity (equal pay for equal work and reducing the overall wage gap) could boost the world economy by about 7% of GDP, or roughly \$7 trillion. For a single economy, this can mean substantial growth: for example, the OECD estimates that closing labour participation and wage gaps could lead to an average 0.2% higher annual GDP growth, cumulating to around 9% higher GDP by 2060 across OECD economies. These broad estimates confirm that gender pay equity is not a zero-sum redistribution – it expands the economic pie by increasing overall productivity and spending power.

- **Asia-Pacific Specific Outcomes:** Our own analysis suggests that reducing gender pay gaps across APEC could unlock over \$1 trillion in economic value in the coming years. This estimate reflects gains in output from better utilisation of women's skills and higher spending by women as their incomes rise. Additionally, a study on the digital economy indicates that including more women in high-growth sectors (like tech) has huge payoffs – APEC's Policy Support Unit estimated that the untapped economic potential of women in the digital economy was about \$94 billion in 2020. Closing the digital gender gap (in access, skills, and pay) would directly contribute to closing the overall economic gap.

The mechanisms by which closing pay gaps boosts GDP are straightforward:

1. **Increased Labour Force Participation:** When women see that they will be paid and treated equally, more women enter or stay in the workforce. This enlarges the labour pool. Many APEC economies are aging or experiencing labour shortages; empowering women can counteract demographic headwinds. For instance, Japan faces serious labour shortages in 63% of its MSMEs, and greater female participation could alleviate this. Higher participation means more people producing goods and services, thus higher GDP.
2. **Higher Productivity:** Equitable pay can mean a better allocation of talent. Currently, if women are discouraged or prevented from reaching their full potential (for example, not advancing to senior roles due to bias, or dropping out due to wage disparities and caregiving burdens), the economy misses out on their productivity. Closing pay gaps often goes hand-in-hand with breaking glass ceilings and enabling women to work in higher-productivity, higher-paid jobs – which raises average productivity. Also, fair pay improves worker morale and effort across the board, which can boost productivity within firms.
3. **Increased Consumption and Market Size:** Women with higher earnings have more disposable income, which translates into greater consumer spending. Since consumer spending is a major component of GDP in most economies, raising women's incomes can significantly stimulate demand for goods and services. Moreover, women tend to invest a sizable portion of their income in their families' health and education, which has long-term positive effects on human capital and economic growth (though those are second-order effects beyond immediate GDP gains).
4. **Talent and Innovation:** On a macro level, having more women in the workforce and leadership can drive innovation. Diverse teams spur creativity, new ideas, and better decision-making. APEC economies that better utilise women's talents could see an innovation boost, contributing to dynamic growth especially in knowledge-based and creative industries.

To put it simply, gender equality makes economic sense. An assertion echoed by leaders and economists alike. When half the population is not fully empowered

economically, economies operate below capacity. Conversely, empowering that half can yield an outsized growth dividend.

Benefits for business: productivity, profitability and MSME growth

At the microeconomic level, individual businesses – including MSMEs – gain a variety of benefits from closing gender pay gaps and promoting gender equality internally. These benefits ultimately aggregate to macro gains, but it's important for business leaders to recognise the direct advantages to their own organisations:

- **Higher Firm Performance:** Numerous studies have found positive correlations between gender diversity/equity and company performance. Companies with gender-balanced teams are 15% more likely to outperform their competitors financially. This often is attributed to diversity of thought leading to better problem solving and understanding of consumer markets (particularly since women drive a large share of consumer purchasing decisions). In addition, fair pay practices help attract top talent (regardless of gender). When a company is known for equity, it widens its talent pool.
- **Employee Engagement and Retention:** Pay transparency and fairness significantly affect morale. Organisations with transparent pay practices see 30% higher employee engagement on average. Engaged employees are more productive and less likely to leave. Reducing unjust pay gaps can thus lower employee turnover. Equitable pay practices reduce turnover costs and heighten innovation. This is especially important for MSMEs, which may not afford high turnover. Retaining skilled employees saves recruitment and training costs and preserves institutional knowledge.
- **Access to Capital and Markets:** There is a growing movement among investors to focus on ESG criteria, which includes gender equality. MSMEs that can demonstrate gender-inclusive practices (like no significant pay gaps, or proactive diversity policies) may have an edge in attracting investment or loans. Some venture capital and funds now incorporate gender-lens investing, meaning they favour businesses that promote gender equality. Similarly, large corporations that have supplier diversity programs might prefer to do business with SMEs that uphold fair labour practices. By closing pay gaps and possibly obtaining related certifications, MSMEs could become preferred suppliers in global value chains. By adopting the Equal Pay Framework, businesses reinforce Asia-Pacific's attractiveness as a trade and investment destination.
- **Productivity and Innovation within MSMEs:** Fair pay can also uncover hidden productivity in the sense that when employees feel valued (and compensation is a strong signal of value), they are more motivated. Also, closing pay gaps often involves addressing factors like upskilling women, giving equal opportunities for advancement, and removing biases. These changes can lead to a more skilled and dynamic workforce. A workforce where talent is rewarded equally tends to place people in roles based on

merit, not gender – effectively better matching employees to jobs, which raises productivity. Furthermore, diverse teams (as a result of inclusive hiring/promotion) have been shown to be more innovative. For a small business, one innovative idea or efficiency improvement can be game-changing.

- **Risk Management and Compliance Readiness:** While the ABAC framework is voluntary, the global trend is toward greater transparency and even regulation on gender pay differences. By acting early to address pay gaps, APEC businesses can stay ahead of the curve and avoid potential future compliance costs or reputational risks. Those who act proactively can shape the narrative and perhaps avoid harsher regulatory intervention. They also mitigate the risk of discrimination lawsuits or conflicts, as consistent pay practices shield against claims of unfair treatment.
- **MSME Competitiveness and Growth:** For MSMEs in particular, embracing gender equality can open new growth avenues. Women are increasingly prominent as entrepreneurs and business leaders in APEC; supporting gender equality internally and externally creates networks of trust and collaboration among women-owned businesses and beyond. Also, MSMEs often operate in local communities, setting an example of equality can enhance their brand reputation locally, attracting customers who value community responsibility. Over time, the cumulative effect of pay equity is a stronger, more loyal workforce and a positive brand image, both of which are critical for MSMEs looking to scale up.

It's worth noting that several APEC economies have business cases documented. For instance, a study in New Zealand found that a significant portion of its productivity improvement could be attributed to better inclusion of women. Bringing women from informal, low-productivity jobs into formal, higher-productivity sectors through education and fair pay yields large marginal gains. Every additional dollar in a woman's hand tends to create a multiplier effect: women invest in their families (education, health) and local economy, which in turn produces more skilled labour and robust communities that businesses benefit from.

The figures below set out a compelling economic argument: not addressing gender pay gaps is economically inefficient and it costs economies billions in lost revenue and growth.

Table 1: Key Economic Benefits of Closing Gender Gaps (select metrics from global and APEC sources)

Economic Impact Metric	Estimate / Insight
Increase in annual GDP with full gender parity (global)	+\$28 trillion globally; +\$17 trillion in Asia-Pacific . This is equivalent to an extra 18% of global GDP, or roughly the size of the U.S. and Chinese economies combined, unlocked by equal participation.
Boost to global GDP by closing the gender pay gap	+7% of global GDP (~\$7 trillion). Narrowing salary disparities yields a sizeable uptick in world output due to higher female earnings and spending.
Lost economic potential in APEC digital economy (2020)	\$94 billion . The cost of women's underrepresentation in the digital economy (tech access and STEM jobs) in APEC, indicating gains achievable by bridging gender digital divides.
Daily productivity loss from gender gaps (global)	\$46 billion per day . This approximates the daily GDP 'left on the table' due to women not being fully empowered in the workforce.
Potential value from reducing APEC gender pay gaps	>\$1 trillion . ABAC's estimate of economic value unlocked in Asia-Pacific by broadly closing gender wage gaps, via higher labour participation and productivity.
Company likelihood to outperform with gender-balanced teams	+15% higher . Firms in the top quartile for gender diversity are more likely to have financial returns above their economy-wide industry median, according to McKinsey and others.
Employee engagement increase with pay transparency	+30% . Greater openness about pay (which typically accompanies efforts to close gaps) correlates with significantly higher employee engagement scores, boosting productivity and retention.
GDP gain from closing gender participation gap	+9.2% by 2060 . OECD research suggests that equalising labour force participation rates and hours worked by gender could raise long-run GDP by nearly 10% on average in developed economies. APEC developing economies could see even larger proportional gains.

Impact modelling

Economic modelling indicates that even modest MSME participation in gender pay gap reporting can deliver significant GDP uplift. Using conservative assumptions and drawing on international literature, the model estimates that eliminating the gender pay gap yields a productivity gain of 0.5 per cent of GDP per one percentage point reduction in wage disparities.

Assuming that pay equity initiatives reduce the gender pay gap by 8.57 per cent, and MSMEs contribute 50 per cent of APEC's total GDP (USD 64.45 trillion), the potential gains range between \$6.9 billion (0.25 per cent of GDP coverage) to \$82.85 billion (3 per cent of GDP coverage) to the global economy. These estimates exclude secondary effects such as increased female labour participation or improved business performance.

Appendix A provides the technical economic model used to estimate the potential GDP impact of reducing the gender pay gap across APEC economies. The model is deliberately conservative and offers a baseline for understanding direct economic gains linked to wage equalisation among MSMEs.

Definitions, Methodology and Structure

The ABAC Equal Pay Framework provides MSMEs in APEC economies with a voluntary, scalable model for calculating and reporting gender pay gaps. It is designed to be both accessible and adaptable, offering a structured entry point for firms regardless of sector or level of data maturity. Importantly, the Framework is non-binding. It aligns with APEC's commitments to inclusive growth, structural reform and sex disaggregated data collection, including as part of the La Serena Roadmap, APEC Structural Reform Principle and Ministerial commitments through the APEC Women and the Economy Forum.

The Framework is underpinned by a clear definition of the gender pay gap, which refers to the difference in pay between women and men across the entire workforce. It reflects broader earnings inequality and structural labour market disparities, rather than assessing equal pay for equal work. The gender pay gap captures patterns such as occupational segregation, unequal representation in senior roles and part time or casual work. It does not measure whether individuals performing the same role receive the same remuneration but instead offers insight into the systemic distribution of pay across genders.

Shifting from mean to median

Initially, the Framework was designed around the average or mean gender pay gap, reflecting global precedent and common practice in early pay transparency schemes. However, during the consultation and testing phases, it became clear that this approach posed limitations for smaller firms, particularly those with few employees or highly skewed pay distributions. Stakeholders consistently noted that the mean metric was overly sensitive to outliers and did not reliably reflect the typical earnings experience of employees in MSMEs. In response to this feedback, the Framework was revised to prioritise the median gender pay gap as the core metric. This is calculated as the percentage difference between the median hourly pay of men and women, using the following formula:

Median GPG (%) = [(Median male hourly pay – Median female hourly pay) ÷ Median male hourly pay] × 100

The median was selected because it is more reliable than the mean in the context of small or unevenly distributed workforces, which are common among MSMEs. The use of hourly pay ensures comparability between full time and part time workers. Additional metrics, such as the mean gender pay gap, pay quartile distribution and disaggregation by role or contract type, are also included as optional enhancements, particularly for larger firms.

To reflect the diversity of enterprise size and capacity across APEC, the Framework adopts a tiered structure. Micro enterprises, typically with fewer than 10 employees, are encouraged to report a basic set of indicators including the median pay gap and gender headcount. Small enterprises, with 11 to 49 employees, are encouraged to add the mean pay gap and consider disaggregating results by employment type or job function. Medium enterprises, with 50 to 250 employees, are expected to report pay quartiles and may analyse gaps by business unit, geography or level of seniority.

Firms are instructed to use a single snapshot date, ideally the last calendar day of the most recent reporting month, to ensure consistency. Payroll data for all employees paid during that period should be included. Where formal records are

unavailable, particularly for micro and informal firms, alternative sources such as timesheets, employee surveys or estimated payroll spreadsheets may be used. The reporting guidance includes clear steps to convert monthly or annual gross pay into hourly rates, allowing for consistent calculation and cross firm comparability.

For firms with more than 50 employees, the Framework includes analysis of the distribution of women and men across pay quartiles. This involves ranking all employees by hourly pay, dividing them into four equal groups and reporting the gender composition of each group. This analysis enables firms to identify where women may be concentrated in lower paid roles or underrepresented at the top of the pay scale.

The Framework encourages a balance between minimum viable metrics and deeper analytical insights. It aims to make gender pay gap reporting feasible and meaningful, without imposing undue complexity or resource burden. Clear, consistent definitions and calculation methods are provided to promote comparability across APEC economies, while still allowing for local adaptation and flexibility.

The result is a practical, accessible and regionally consistent framework that enables MSMEs to engage with gender pay equity on their own terms. It creates an entry point for firms to understand their pay structures, identify patterns of inequality and take targeted action. To deliver real and lasting outcomes for women, the Framework must be understood not as a standalone tool, but as the foundation for a phased and supported reform journey. While the Framework provides a credible starting point, it is the accompanying digital infrastructure, user friendly tools, and implementation support that will determine its effectiveness.

The Online Calculator and Toolkit are essential next steps. They are designed to streamline participation by removing the complexity of manual calculations and providing tailored, actionable guidance for each business. However, ease of use alone is not sufficient. Uptake will only be achieved if businesses see relevance and value. This means localising the language, aligning incentives with economy policy settings, and embedding the tool into broader regulatory, reputational or procurement frameworks. In this way, voluntary action can be enabled, normalised and eventually scaled.

It is clear from the research that customisation to each economy's context is a critical success factor and without it, even the most well-designed framework is unlikely to deliver measurable improvements. Effective implementation requires not only practical utility but strategic alignment and institutional commitment.

Design Principles for the Framework

These principles, drawn from both stakeholder input and global best practices, include:

- **Simplicity:** The tool and framework should be easy to use and understand. A plain-language user interface was prioritised so that even MSMEs without dedicated HR departments or sophisticated IT systems could participate. The underlying calculations were kept straightforward (favoring median calculations over complex statistical models) to ensure accessibility.

- **Accessibility:** The framework must be accessible to all types of users. This meant ensuring the tool is **mobile-compatible** and can be used on basic devices, following web content accessibility guidelines for users of varying abilities. It also should be operable in low-connectivity settings, thus an offline Excel-based version was considered, not just an online dashboard. Critically, **multilingual support** was deemed essential: guidance materials and the interface will be provided in all APEC economies' major languages.
- **Localisation:** The framework is adaptable to each economy's local context. This involves automatic adjustments for local **currency** and **regulatory context**, as well as customisable fields for local terminology. For instance, the online tool prototype allows users to select their economy, which could tailor aspects like default currency symbols or reference any local compliance notes. The consultation feedback about differing MSME size criteria and labour market norms underlined the need for localisation options.
- **Recognition:** To motivate participation, the framework builds in recognition for firms that engage in pay gap analysis and improvement. It is possible in future for APEC to issue **certificates or digital badges** that companies can earn for completing a pay gap assessment and demonstrating commitment to pay equity. Such recognition taps into businesses' desire to be seen as responsible and can be showcased to employees, customers, and investors. This principle also aligns with recommendations from OECD and others that incentives (like awards or certifications) can spur voluntary compliance on equal pay.
- **Modular Updates:** The framework was designed with a long-term view. While it focuses on gender pay gaps initially, it is built to be modular so that in the future it could incorporate other pay equity dimensions (such as ethnicity/race, disability, or other diversity factors). This future-proofing means the platform can evolve into a more comprehensive pay equity tool, reflecting ABAC's broader inclusion goals over time.

Development Process and Pilot Engagement

The development of the ABAC Equal Pay Framework followed a multi-stage, consultative process designed to ensure technical rigour, business relevance, and regional adaptability. The project was anchored in the principles of co-design, with the deliberate inclusion of diverse stakeholder perspectives from across APEC economies. It progressed through three distinct but iterative phases: research and design, stakeholder engagement and refinement, and field testing and validation.

The first phase involved a comprehensive review of international best practice, including gender pay gap legislation, voluntary reporting schemes, and toolkits in use across both OECD and APEC member economies. This global scan informed early decisions around metrics, tiering, and methodology. Framework design drew heavily on lessons from New Zealand, Canada, and the United Kingdom, where phased implementation, streamlined calculators, and strong communications strategies proved essential to uptake, particularly among smaller firms.

The second phase involved engagement with ABAC members, women's business networks, employer associations, and representatives from the APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE). These consultations tested early

assumptions and surfaced practical constraints that shape the reporting landscape for MSMEs. In particular, stakeholders highlighted the need for simplified tools, user-friendly templates, and minimal data handling requirements. Many noted that while businesses were willing to engage with pay equity issues, they lacked the time, capability, or resources to undertake manual calculations or interpret complex metrics.

Workshops brought together participants including government officials, business owners (especially from MSMEs), HR practitioners, women's business associations, and policy experts. The objective was to gather on-the-ground insights on the barriers, needs, and preferences that should shape the Equal Pay Framework.

Key feedback from these consultations was meticulously recorded and integrated. For example, economies highlighted the importance of local context: definitions of what counts as a micro, small or medium enterprise differ by economy, so the framework needed flexibility to accommodate various employee-count thresholds. Participants from economies such as Chile and Japan stressed that local language customisation of the tool and materials would be critical for uptake, as well as adaptation to local currency and tax systems. Cultural factors also surfaced – in some places, discussing wages is considered sensitive and pay transparency is low, meaning the framework would have to build trust and confidentiality into its approach. The consultation in Chile noted high levels of informal employment, which complicates formal pay gap measurement. In Japan, consultations revealed capacity issues such as a lack of data analysis know-how among many small firms (nearly half of surveyed Japanese SMEs reported lacking talent for data analysis), as well as structural issues like many women working in part-time or non-regular roles, which any pay gap analysis would need to account for.

The project team also engaged civil society and labour groups for broader perspectives. Women's organisations and labour unions were invited to provide input on how to ensure the framework is fair and effective. Such outreach helped us to understand, for instance, what support MSMEs would need to move from diagnosing a pay gap to actually closing it. Across economies, stakeholders expressed a desire for clear action plans, external support, and incentives to accompany the measurement tool. These insights shaped the framework to go beyond measurement and include guidance on next steps and recommendations for government incentives.

This feedback led to the refinement of the framework's tiered structure, the prioritisation of the median pay gap over the mean, and the decision to automate calculations through a prototype online tool to remove any manual calculations or burden of process on MSMEs. The revised model was then presented for feedback in targeted pilot discussions with business leaders and technical advisors.

The testing process generated critical insights. For example, firms in Chile and Malaysia expressed strong interest in the reputational benefits of reporting but required tools in local language and preferred mobile-friendly formats. In Papua New Guinea, concerns around informal employment and data availability prompted development of alternative approaches for micro businesses, such as estimation templates and owner-led surveys. In Australia and Japan, firms sought clarity on how reporting might align with existing ESG or procurement frameworks.

Pilot engagements confirmed that while the framework offers a sound foundation, successful implementation depends on localisation, digital enablement, and the

perception of business value. This reaffirmed the importance of developing an accompanying Toolkit and support strategy as part of phase two. Participating economies expressed willingness to integrate the tool into economy policy ecosystems, if it was customisable and aligned with broader gender equality goals.

The development proceeded in phases, allowing for iteration. Early drafts of the framework were circulated for feedback, and the project underwent multiple rounds of edits. By Phase 4 (June 2025), the framework was being revised based on feedback and consultation findings to produce a final polished version for ABAC's consideration. This iterative cycle ensured the final product was well-vetted by its intended users.

Overall, the development process strengthened the technical robustness and business credibility of the framework, while ensuring that its design remains responsive to the diverse needs and capacities of MSMEs across the region. It demonstrated that voluntary frameworks can support structural change but only when designed with the end user in mind and deployed in a way that is accessible, relevant, and scalable.

One tangible outcome of the iterative process was the creation of a prototype online tool. This prototype was used during consultations to allow stakeholders to test the approach and provide practical feedback. Participants could simulate entering data and generating results, helping the designers observe usability issues and understand which features were most valued. The prototype was explicitly not a finalised tool, but a working model to gather input from users – and if ABAC ultimately endorsed the framework, the intention is to further refine this prototype into a full-fledged application.

In the final stakeholder debriefs, we found that to move from insight to action on pay gaps, MSMEs desired concrete elements like “step-by-step action plans, access to external technical support, and eligibility for funding or tax benefits”. They also noted economic challenges (labour shortages, cost pressures) that compete with gender equity efforts, reinforcing that incentives and business-case arguments are necessary to get buy-in. These findings were woven into the framework's recommendations on implementation (discussed later in this report).

The ABAC Equal Pay Framework in detail

The ABAC Equal Pay Framework is designed as a practical tool to advance pay equity in the private sector, with a focus on MSMEs. Its primary objective is to provide businesses with a voluntary, structured model for calculating and reporting gender pay gaps. In doing so, the framework aims to foster greater transparency and self-awareness among employers regarding pay disparities between women and men, and to spur actions that close those gaps over time.

This model is scalable, sector-agnostic, and intentionally simple to reduce the burden of participation. At its core, the Framework offers a stepwise approach to gender pay gap transparency, reflecting differences in business size and capacity while aligning with broader APEC goals of inclusive growth and data-driven policy.

Scope and Design

The Framework is based on a tiered structure aligned with firm size (though economies can adjust exact employee-count cutoffs to align with their local MSME definitions). It enables progressive engagement and ensures firms of all capacities can participate meaningfully. The model defines minimum and recommended reporting expectations for three tiers:

- **Tier 1 – Micro Enterprises (1–10 employees):** *Minimal reporting requirements.* A micro firm is only recommended to report the **median gender pay gap** and a basic gender headcount breakdown. This means at minimum, a microenterprise would calculate the median pay for women and men and compute the percentage gap and also state how many women and men it employs. These two indicators give a snapshot of pay equity and representation without overburdening the smallest companies.
- **Tier 2 – Small Enterprises (11–50 employees):** *Intermediate reporting requirements.* A small enterprise should report all Tier 1 metrics plus some additional ones: specifically, the **average (mean) gender pay gap** is calculated (in addition to median) and an **optional pay quartile analysis** is encouraged if data is sufficient. The quartile analysis means breaking the workforce into four equal parts by pay level and showing the percentage of women and men in each quartile. While optional for Tier 2, this begins to surface whether women are concentrated in lower pay brackets – a typical driver of pay gaps. By including the mean gap, Tier 2 firms provide more context (mean can highlight the influence of any very high salaries or bonuses, for instance).
- **Tier 3 – Medium Enterprises (51–250 employees):** *Comprehensive reporting.* A medium-sized firm is asked to calculate all the above metrics (median and mean gap, headcount, quartiles) with **quartile analysis now mandatory**, and additionally to report a **bonus pay gap** if applicable. The bonus gap refers to differences in bonus payments or other additional compensation between men and women – often reported as the median or mean bonus received by each gender. This metric addresses another aspect of pay disparity (for example, if men disproportionately receive performance bonuses or commissions, that could widen overall earnings gaps). Medium firms typically

have more structured HR data, making this feasible. They are also likely to have enough employees to make quartile data meaningful.

This structure was informed by consultation feedback, which highlighted the need for a model that balances rigour with feasibility. Initial drafts emphasised the average pay gap (mean), but field testing revealed that the median gap was more stable and meaningful for MSMEs with small staff numbers. As a result, the Framework now prioritises median calculations as the core metric.

To ensure comparability, all metrics are calculated using a standard snapshot methodology. Pay is reported in local currency and converted to an hourly rate for consistency. MSMEs are encouraged to disaggregate data where feasible and to use the provided templates or calculator to automate basic computations.

MSME Tier	Firm Size (employees)	Standard Indicators and Metrics	Additional Recommended Metrics
Tier 1: Micro	1–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Median Gender Pay Gap (%) - Number of female and male employees 	(None beyond required)
Tier 2: Small	11–49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Median Gender Pay Gap (%) - Mean Gender Pay Gap (%) - Headcount by gender 	- Pay Quartile distribution (women's and men's share in each pay quartile) (optional if data allows)
Tier 3: Medium	50–250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Median Gender Pay Gap (%) - Mean Gender Pay Gap (%) - Headcount by gender - Pay Quartiles (Q1–Q4, % women and men) - Bonus Pay Gap (median/mean bonus differences) 	- Any additional analysis (e.g., by department or job level) as resources permit

This tiered model ensures that even the smallest firms can participate meaningfully, rather than opting out due to complexity. For example, a five-employee startup might only need a few numbers to comply (and the provided calculator tool can derive those quickly), whereas a 200-employee manufacturer will produce a richer set of data and insights. The framework documentation notes that the company's selection of its size tier in the tool will automatically determine your reporting tier and requirements. This automation in the tool eases the process – the MSME simply indicates its size category, and the tool configures which fields and outputs are needed, avoiding confusion.

Another important aspect is flexibility for economy-specific MSME definitions. During consultations, economies pointed out that “MSME” can mean different things in different places (some define by revenue, some have different employee count thresholds). The framework acknowledges this and suggests that economies can map their local definitions onto the Tier 1/2/3 structure. For instance, if an economy considers enterprises up to 5 employees as micro instead of 10, they could adjust the cutover but still maintain three graduated levels of reporting. The key is to maintain the principle of proportionality and not overburden businesses beyond their capacity.

The modular design supports local adaptations while maintaining cross-economy coherence. Jurisdictions may tailor the language, indicators, or reporting channels to reflect economy laws, tax systems, or labour market conditions. For example, some economies may use different definitions of MSME size or require inclusion of bonuses and allowances in gross pay calculations.

In sum, the tiered reporting standards strike a balance between comprehensiveness and feasibility. By scaling requirements, ABAC increases the likelihood of broad adoption – micro and small firms are not scared off by onerous demands, while medium firms (which often have more resources and larger gender gaps in absolute terms) provide fuller transparency. Over time, as firms grow or become more comfortable with reporting, they can move up to more detailed analyses.

Voluntary Participation and Support Tools

Participation is entirely voluntary, but the Framework will be progressively supported by a suite of tools to simplify uptake. An online tool was piloted in phase one, Phase two would see this tool refined and customised with printable templates, multilingual guidance, and an optional submission portal to contribute to APEC-wide data collection. Firms could choose to retain their data internally, publish their results voluntarily, or submit anonymised data for benchmarking.

Data Collection and Reporting Guidelines

For companies to implement the framework, they need clear guidance on what data to collect and how to report it. The framework provides detailed instructions to ensure consistency and protect sensitive information.

Companies are advised to gather data on each employee's earnings and work hours for the chosen snapshot period (e.g., a specific month or year). The framework's step-by-step guide suggests collecting gross earnings and hours worked for all employees during your chosen period and then calculate an hourly wage for each employee (total earnings divided by hours). By standardising to hourly rates (or a consistent period), the measure accounts for full-time vs part-time differences.

Key data fields include:

- **Employee identifier** (anonymized, e.g. ID numbers).
- **Gender** (with options beyond binary: Woman, Man, or Non-binary, reflecting inclusivity in data collection).
- **Occupation or job level** (the tool uses standardized codes like ISCO-08 classification to allow breakdown by occupation categories).
- **Employment type** (permanent, contract, part-time, etc.) and work pattern (full-time/part-time).
- **Pay data:** Total gross earnings in the period, hours worked, and any additional pay like bonuses or commissions. Taxes can be input if needed, presumably to allow net vs gross analysis, but the focus is on gross pay.
- The tool automatically computes each employee's hourly wage from the earnings and hours.

The guidance emphasises **data quality tips**, such as using a consistent currency and time period for all employees, including all forms of compensation in total earnings, and separating out bonuses or one-time payments for accurate analysis. Ensuring consistency is crucial for the calculations to be meaningful.

For micro enterprises or those with very few employees, the framework offers a simplified data entry mode to just input summary statistics: total number of men and women, and their median wages. This way, a micro business doesn't need to list every employee if it can directly compute the medians externally – a useful shortcut if privacy or time is a concern.

Privacy and Anonymity

Given the sensitivity of salary information, the framework underlines that individual data will remain confidential. Reports generated focus only on aggregated metrics (like overall median gap, quartile percentages) and must not identify any individual's pay. The tool itself assigns generic IDs to each employee entry (e.g., EMP001, EMP002) to avoid using names. The project team was mindful that in small firms, it can be easy to guess individuals behind data, so the framework cautions companies to handle and share results responsibly – ideally only the high-level metrics are published or shared, not raw data.

Reporting Output

After data entry, the tool produces results in two main forms:

1. Quantitative results (metrics and charts) and
2. Qualitative results (narratives and action plans).

On the quantitative side, once the user clicks "Calculate Gender Pay Gap," the online tool generates a **dashboard of key metrics** including: median GPG (required for all tiers), average GPG (for tiers 2 and 3), total number of employees by gender, and possibly breakdowns like the percentage of women in each pay quartile (for larger firms). If applicable, a **bonus gap** figure is shown (for tier 3). These metrics are accompanied by simple explanations – e.g., highlighting if the gap is positive (women earn less) or negative (women earn more), reinforcing the interpretation for the user.

Crucially, the framework emphasises **data visualisation** as a best practice: the tool includes charts such as a wage distribution graph or bar charts comparing median and mean wages by gender, and a quartile chart showing gender distribution across pay bands. Visuals make it easier to grasp patterns at a glance and are recommended by experts to communicate pay gaps clearly. The user can export these graphics for inclusion in their own reports or presentations.

The qualitative results side provides narrative outputs: an **Executive Summary** that the tool auto-generates to summarise the findings (useful for briefing company leadership), and a **Detailed Analysis** that breaks down the results by metrics and possibly suggests reasons or context. This feature addresses a common challenge – once a company sees its gap, it often asks "why do we have this gap?" The tool can't fully answer that, but by structuring the data (e.g., if quartile analysis shows

most women are in the bottom quartile, the narrative can point that out as a contributor), it guides the user toward diagnosis.

Furthermore, the framework includes guidance for **qualitative self-assessment**: companies are prompted to consider factors like their promotion policies, recruitment pipeline, or caregiving support, which might explain the quantitative results. This encourages introspection beyond the numbers.

Reporting Standards

The framework encourages companies to report their pay gap findings transparently and regularly (e.g., annually or even quarterly for tracking progress). While voluntary, if many firms disclose their gaps, it can create healthy peer pressure. ABAC calls for economies to consider adopting this voluntary framework broadly so that it becomes a norm to report and discuss pay gaps.

At a minimum, a participating MSME would produce a short **Equal Pay Report** containing their key GPG metrics, an explanation of the figures, and ideally an action plan of how they intend to address any significant gap. The framework stops short of mandating the content of an action plan, but it provides an **“Action Plan” step** in the tool to nudge companies toward setting goals and measures (Step 7 in the calculator guidance is “Develop Action Plan”).

Finally, the framework aligns with the principle of **benchmarking and targets** – companies are encouraged to compare their results with industry or economy benchmarks and to set targets for improvement. For example, an MSME that finds a 20% gap might aim to reduce it to 10% in the next year. The tool's ability to track data over time (especially if used regularly) helps with monitoring improvements. ABAC also envisions that as more data is collected, cross-company benchmarks could be fed back to users (e.g., showing the average gap for similar-sized firms in the same sector). This competitive element – seeing how one's company stacks up – was noted as effective in jurisdictions like the UK to drive compliance.

In summary, the framework provides a full blueprint for MSMEs: from **data collection** (what to gather, how to input) to **result generation** (what metrics and visuals are produced) to **reporting and acting** (how to interpret and what to do next). By following these guidelines, even firms with no prior experience in pay analysis can conduct a meaningful self-assessment and begin the journey toward pay equity.

Digitising the Framework

A standout feature of the ABAC Equal Pay Framework is its prototype **online tool** – essentially a user-friendly application (Excel-based or web-based) that operationalises the framework's methodology for MSMEs. The tool is the conduit through which companies engage with the framework, and it was designed with careful consideration of usability and best practices.

Purpose and User Experience

The tool is intended to guide MSMEs through using the ABAC Equal Pay Framework step by step. Upon opening the tool, users are greeted with an **Overview Tab** that

explains the purpose of the framework, the methodology (e.g., how the GPG is calculated), and the benefits of measuring pay gaps. It also summarises what will be required based on company size (the tier requirements). This on-boarding ensures that even someone new to the concept can quickly grasp why they should do this and what information they need.

The interface then guides users through a series of steps (as detailed in the framework's guidance, Steps 1–10):

- **Step 1: Access and Review Overview** – as described, understanding the tool and requirements.
- **Step 2: Enter Company Information** – input basic details like company name, size tier, industry sector (using ISIC classifications for consistency), economy, and currency. This step is crucial because, as noted, the *“company size selection will automatically determine your reporting tier and requirements.”* If the user selects “Micro”, the tool may simplify subsequent inputs. The inclusion of **industry and economy** fields is forward-looking: it allows the tool to later benchmark results by sector or flag economy-specific tips (e.g., if an economy uses a particular taxation that affects payroll).
- **Step 3: Gather and Enter Employee Data** – the user is directed to the Employee Data tab. Here the tool offers two modes as mentioned: **Option A (Summary data for Micro)** or **Option B (Detailed entry)**. In Option B, the interface likely has a table where each row is an employee and columns for all the fields (gender, role, earnings, hours, etc.) as described earlier. The tool provides convenience features like “Add 10 Rows” for bulk entry or importing from CSV for companies that have their payroll data in a spreadsheet already. These features reduce the manual effort for users.
- **Progress Tracking:** The tool includes a progress bar showing data completeness (for instance, “X% of required fields filled”) to encourage fully entering the data before calculation.
- **Step 4: Calculate Results** – a single click button (“Calculate Gender Pay Gap”) triggers the computation. The automation here is key: the user does not need to manually apply formulas; the tool does it and then *“automatically navigates to the Quantitative Results tab.”* This smooth transition helps non-expert users see results instantly.
- **Step 5: Review Quantitative Results** – the metrics dashboard is presented as discussed: median gap, average gap (if tier 2/3), total employees (with breakdown by gender), etc., along with visual charts. For a tier 3 firm, one might see a chart of pay quartiles illustrating, say, 60% of lowest quartile are women vs. 20% of top quartile, which graphically explains a pay gap scenario. If bonus data was provided, a statistic like “Women’s median bonus is 5% lower than men’s” might appear.
- **Step 6: Analyse Qualitative Results** – here the tool switches to a narrative mode. The “Qualitative Results” tab likely contains templated text that the tool populates with the company’s data. For example, it might say:
“Executive Summary: [Company X] has a median gender pay gap of 12%,

indicating that the median female employee earns 88% of the median male employee's wage. Women represent 45% of the workforce, but only 20% of the top pay quartile, suggesting underrepresentation in higher-paying roles. No immediate equal pay violations were detected for like-for-like roles, but the gap is driven by... etc." This summary gives management a narrative to easily digest. The **Detailed Analysis** might then break it down: "By the numbers: Median female wage = \$Y, Median male wage = \$Z. Mean gap = ... Quartile analysis: Women make up A% of the lowest quartile vs B% of highest quartile. Bonus gap: ..." and perhaps bullet points of possible causes or comparisons to benchmarks.

- **Step 7: Develop Action Plan** – the tool prompts the user to outline next steps. It might provide a template or checklist (e.g., "Identify at least 3 actions such as reviewing hiring practices, standardising starting salaries, conducting unconscious bias training, establishing mentorship for women to advance to higher-paying roles, etc."). While actual solutions will vary, the framework knows from research that companies benefit from structured guidance. Indeed, workshop feedback was that organisations desire "*step-by-step action plans*" and external support, so this step is crucial. The tool likely doesn't enforce anything here but encourages writing down an action plan.
- **Step 8: Benchmark Performance** – if the feature is available, the tool could show how the company's pay gap compares to averages (industry average or economy average, if data is in the system). Even if not in the initial prototype, the framework notes the importance of benchmarking and possibly setting target gaps or timelines. This step might also encourage the company to run the analysis periodically (say annually) and track progress over time.
- **Step 9: Learn from Success Stories** – The framework envisions sharing best practices. The tool or accompanying materials could include case studies of companies that improved their pay gap, or links to resources. For instance, "Company Y reduced their gap from 15% to 5% in two years by implementing pay audits and mentorship programs." Such stories can inspire and also provide practical ideas (like participating in the APEC BEST Award or other initiatives that highlight gender inclusion).
- **Step 10: Generate and Share Reports** – the final step allows the user to export their results. The tool can likely generate a PDF or a slide deck with the key charts and stats. This makes it easy for the MSME to then **share their report** with stakeholders – be it internally with staff and leadership, or externally with industry bodies, investors, or even voluntarily on their website. The framework encourages sharing as a means of demonstrating commitment to gender equality (and possibly to earn the recognition badges/certificates).

The prototype online tool is built incorporating **global best practices in pay-gap analysis**, as the framework document explicitly points out. To highlight a few:

- It reports **multiple metrics (mean and median)** to provide a complete picture, but emphasizes median for stability.

- It allows **segmentation** of data (by job level, department, hours, etc.) to pinpoint structural issues. This is in line with recommendations from the OECD and examples like New Zealand's toolkit.
- It ensures **transparency of method** – all formulas and calculations are open for the user to see, building trust in the results. The tool likely provides information on how each metric is derived, aligning with the OECD's call for clear instructions so that companies understand their obligations and outcomes.
- It facilitates **benchmarking and target-setting**, as mentioned, consistent with UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) that advise companies to set targets for gender equality improvements.
- It has strong **data visualisation** and user education built-in, which is often cited as critical for SMEs who might not be analytics experts.
- It includes **guidance and training material** embedded in the tool (like context help text, definitions on hover, etc.), fulfilling the role that separate training manuals or workshops might otherwise play.

In designing the tool, ABAC also examined existing pay gap analysis platforms globally to understand their features and limitations for MSMEs. A comparative analysis in the framework document shows that many commercial tools (e.g., Syndio, PayAnalytics, PayScale) offer advanced analytics (like regression models) but are **geared toward large enterprises**, often requiring extensive HR data and expensive subscriptions. These were deemed not suitable for APEC MSMEs. Some public tools like New Zealand's Gender Pay Gap Toolkit or Switzerland's LOGIB are closer to the needs of smaller organisations, and offer **economy-specific solutions**, however they lack cross-economy benchmarking or multilingual support. The ABAC Equal Pay Framework and online tool therefore fills an important gap: a free (or low-cost), APEC-wide resource tailored for MSMEs, with multi-language capability and regional benchmarking, which did not exist before.

It takes inspiration from the best elements of various tools – e.g., Swiss LOGIB's approach of different modes for different company sizes (simple vs advanced), or the UK and Boston (USA) calculators that are simple and confidential – but adapts them to an Asia-Pacific, MSME-friendly context.

The prototype online tool demonstrates the **practical engine** of the framework, translating concepts into actions for businesses. It embodies ABAC's design principles (simple, accessible, localised, etc.) and equips MSMEs with a concrete means to diagnose and address gender pay gaps. By demystifying the process and providing guided analysis, the tool lowers the barrier for hundreds of thousands of small businesses to join the movement for pay equity. As more companies use it, the collective data and experience will grow, hopefully creating a virtuous cycle of learning and improvement across the APEC region.

APEC-Wide Implementation Pathways and Economy Tailoring

Designing a robust framework and tool is a critical step, but equally important is the strategy for implementation across APEC's 21 economies. The success of the ABAC Equal Pay Framework hinges on widespread adoption and integration into existing economic structures.

ABAC is well placed to partner with the APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE), SME Working Group (SMEWG) and the annual Women and the Economy Forum (WEF) to integrate the framework as a deliverable under the La Serena Roadmap.

The framework should also be linked to APEC's **economic monitoring and reporting mechanisms**. A notable opportunity is the APEC **Women and the Economy Dashboard**, which tracks gender inclusion indicators. Currently, the Dashboard does not include specific metrics on gender pay gaps or pay distribution. Incorporating data from the Equal Pay Framework into the Dashboard would fill this gap and allow APEC to monitor progress in closing pay disparities regionally. For example, the Dashboard could start reporting the average median pay gap in each economy, or the proportion of firms voluntarily reporting pay gaps. Global examples have already show that voluntary public benchmarking like this was effective in spurring action of micro and small enterprises to reduce gender pay gaps.

Integration into Economy-Level Programs

While ABAC provides the collective vision, implementation happens within each member economy. The framework is designed to be flexible so that economies at different stages of development and with different cultures can adapt it. Key considerations for tailoring include:

- **Regulatory and Cultural Context:** Some APEC economies already have pay gap reporting mandates or strong corporate transparency cultures, while others have none and may even consider salary information private. In economies with existing regulations, the ABAC framework can complement by focusing on MSMEs (which are often exempt from stricter laws) or by providing a uniform approach that companies can use voluntarily on top of legal compliance. In more conservative contexts, a voluntary, business-led approach might be more palatable initially than government mandates, as it frames pay equity as a business improvement process rather than an imposed requirement.
- **MSME Definition and Structure:** Each economy can adjust the tier thresholds to reflect their definitions (as discussed). For example, if Economy A defines micro as <5 employees and small as 5–50, they can map the ABAC Tier 1 to <5, Tier 2 to 5–50, etc., without losing consistency in the concept. Also, some economies categorize even micro-enterprises as informal or unregistered businesses. While the framework primarily targets formal MSMEs, economies with large informal sectors (like some in Southeast Asia or Latin America) might use the framework as an incentive for formalisation – e.g., showcasing

that formal businesses can leverage tools and possibly incentives that informal ones cannot.

- **Language and Accessibility:** As noted, participants explicitly said they need the tool in their local language to use it within 12 months. Thus, a near-term step is to produce official translations of the framework and software. Local terminology for job titles or common benefits can also be incorporated (the tool's use of international job classification can be supplemented with local examples to make it relatable).
- **Technical Capacity:** Not all economies have the same digital infrastructure or SME support systems. The framework tool will likely be offered both as a downloadable Excel and an online platform. Some micro enterprises in developing APEC economies might not have reliable internet access – an issue raised like *"having internet access, especially among micro and small companies, is critical"*. So, ensuring an offline version and disseminating it via channels like USB or local SME centres could be considered in lower-connectivity areas. Training is another capacity issue: economies could leverage existing SME training programs to include a module on using this tool, ensuring that lack of data analysis skills (pointed out by Japan's SMEs) is not a barrier.
- **Local Labour Market Factors:** Each economy has unique factors affecting gender pay gaps – be it high informality, occupational segregation in certain industries, or prevailing social norms. Economies should consider these when promoting the framework. For instance, an economy with a large informal economy might initially target larger SMEs or formal sector companies for adoption and simultaneously work on incentives to bring informal businesses into the formal fold (perhaps by linking formalisation with access to tools and recognition). In societies less open about salaries, emphasis on confidentiality and aggregated reporting can be made, to reassure companies and employees.
- **Phased Implementation:** Tailoring also means economies can set their own timelines. A possible phased approach could be: Year 1 – raise awareness and run pilot programs with volunteer companies; Year 2 – expand training and encourage more firms; Year 3 – incorporate results into policy dialogues, consider if any regulatory steps needed. Each economy can pace this according to their readiness. The framework's flexible nature means even if only a subset of companies use it initially, it's fine – it's voluntary and additive.

Capacity Building and Partnerships

To achieve scale, partnerships and existing networks that support MSMEs must be leveraged:

- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Partnering with large enterprises, industry associations, or NGOs can amplify reach. For example, feedback from consultations suggested that telecom or tech companies could host workshops for MSMEs on how to do pay gap reporting, since they have both a stake in digital inclusion and resources for outreach. PPPs also allow cost-

sharing – using private sector venues, trainers, or platforms can reduce the burden on government budgets.

- **Government and SME Agency Support:** Economies can embed the Framework into broader SME support and entrepreneurship programs. For instance, if a economy has a small business development centre network, those centres can train SMEs on this tool as part of improving business practices. Governments can also provide financial incentives or support to MSMEs that participate. ABAC's report suggests measures like small matching grants for those implementing an equal pay action plan. Even limited funds can encourage participation.
- **Chambers of Commerce and Business Networks:** Local chambers and trade associations signalled their interest in acting as key messengers, noting they often have the trust of MSMEs. By working with them, APEC can disseminate the framework widely. Many economies have women's business councils or SME associations that could champion the cause, highlighting success stories among their members (the framework itself encourages sharing peer success stories). Seeing similar businesses benefit can persuade others.
- **Training and Toolkits:** Beyond the tool itself, supportive materials like quick-start guides, FAQ documents, or online tutorials (videos, webinars) can build capacity and be customised to meet each Economy where they are at.

Regional collaboration can also enhance capacity building. For example, ABAC is well positioned to partner with ASEAN or the Pacific Alliance. An ABAC-ASEAN-level workshop could train advisors, who then in turn guide SMEs in each member economy. This train-the-trainer model is efficient and helps standardise understanding across economies. It also acknowledges varied capacity: some emerging economies might need very basic awareness building (e.g., why gender equality matters for business), whereas more developed ones can jump straight into fine-tuning metrics or even experimenting with additional analytics. ABAC's diverse membership can be an advantage if the more advanced economies share knowledge and technical assistance with the developing economies.

Incentives, Recognition, and Certification

A major theme in implementing the framework is creating incentives for MSMEs to participate, beyond the intrinsic benefit of improved performance. ABAC's consultations reinforced that many small businesses, while sympathetic to gender equality, face pressing financial and operational challenges. They may need an extra nudge to prioritise a pay gap analysis amidst competing demands. Thus, low-cost reward systems are proposed:

- **Certification and Seals:** The consultation findings indicated recognition, awards, or certifications would be effective incentives according to economies' input. Firms that complete a pay gap analysis and demonstrate steps toward equal pay could receive an official certificate or badge from APEC recognising their use of the Framework and could be a powerful motivator, with businesses able to use it in marketing, signalling to investors or clients that they meet international standards in social responsibility. Given

global value chains increasingly emphasise ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) criteria, having an APEC gender equity certificate might even help MSMEs win contracts or partnerships.

- **Awards and Public Recognition:** Building on existing APEC award platforms is another route to amplify impact. For instance, the APEC BEST Award showcases outstanding female entrepreneurs. It has been successful in bringing visibility (winners often gain new markets or partners). A new category or a parallel award could be introduced. This award could recognise MSMEs (regardless of owner's gender) that have made significant progress in closing their pay gap or have innovative practices to ensure pay equity. The winners could be featured in APEC publications or invited to events, which gives free publicity. Consultation with MSMEs revealed such public recognition is high visibility and motivates firms (businesses care about their reputation and network opportunities from these honours). Importantly, incentives should directly benefit the MSMEs, not just intermediary organisations – meaning the firms themselves get the spotlight or tangible reward.
- **Monetary or Market Incentives:** Some economies might choose to offer financial incentives. For example, a government could provide a tax credit or rebate to firms that complete a pay gap analysis and follow through with an action plan (perhaps after a year of implementation, they prove improvement to get the credit). Alternatively, integrating this into public procurement could be powerful: giving preference or extra points in government contract bids to companies that have a gender equity certificate or have reported their pay gap. In Europe, certain incentives along these lines exist – ABAC cites that some economies reward employers for reducing gaps, and it suggests APEC economies could do similar, like awarding bonus points in SME grant programs for gender-inclusive firms. Even small financial boosts can tip the cost-benefit calculation for an MSME to invest time in this initiative.
- **Benchmarking:** We mentioned the Women and Economy Dashboard as a benchmarking tool at the economy level, but benchmarking can also happen at industry or local levels. For instance, if an industry association publishes an annual report of average pay gaps in its sector (with anonymity for individual firms), companies can see if they are above or below the norm and may take action if they are lagging.

Collectively, these incentives create an ecosystem of encouragement around the Equal Pay Framework. They help shift the narrative from this being a compliance-like exercise to being an opportunity for positive recognition and business advantage. This report underscores that equitable pay is a driver of competitiveness and resilience in global value chains. So framing participation as beneficial, not just because it's the right thing, but because it can open doors (certifications, awards, new customers), is key to scaling up involvement.

Monitoring and Ongoing Support

As implementation proceeds, monitoring mechanisms will be important to track progress and maintain momentum. Since the framework is voluntary, monitoring will not be in the form of enforcement but rather in measuring impact and encouraging accountability:

- **Annual Reporting and Review:** APEC could institute an annual review where economies report how many companies have used the framework or any notable outcomes. This could be compiled by the Policy Support Unit or another body and presented at the PPWE/WEF meetings. Over time, trends can be observed, and hopefully a narrowing of gaps.
- **Showcasing Best Practices:** Monitoring is not only about numbers but also qualitative insights. APEC can maintain a repository of case studies or an online portal where companies (especially those recognised as champions) share what actions they took and what results were achieved.
- **Feedback Loop for Framework Improvement:** As more MSMEs use the tool, they will undoubtedly have feedback and new needs. ABAC should maintain a mechanism for users to suggest improvements or ask questions. This feedback can inform future versions of the framework and tool.
- **Linking to Broader Policy Reforms:** Voluntary efforts can sometimes pave the way for policy changes. Data and experience from the ABAC framework might highlight certain structural issues that need government intervention – for instance, if it becomes clear that a lack of childcare is a major cause of pay gaps in many places (due to women dropping to part-time roles), economies might bolster childcare policies. By reviewing laws on non-discrimination, supporting pay transparency legislation where feasible, or incentivising companies further, the framework can act as a pilot ground that informs such reforms.
- **Ensuring Longevity:** Finally, for the initiative to have lasting impact, it should be institutionalised within APEC's work. ABAC itself can keep the pressure on by reporting progress to Leaders each year and highlighting where more work is needed. Given that the Putrajaya Vision target year is 2040, one could set intermediate targets (like significantly reducing the regional gender pay gap by 2030 in line with SDG commitments, and achieving near parity by 2040). These long-term goals help sustain focus beyond the initial excitement.

Through these implementation pathways – high-level endorsement, localised tailoring, capacity building, incentives, and monitoring – the ABAC Equal Pay Framework can transition from a well-designed document and tool into a living, impactful program across APEC. The next section will quantify in depth why these efforts are worthwhile by examining the economic benefits of closing the gender pay gap, reinforcing the case for action.

Integration into APEC Structural Reform Agenda

Integrating the Equal Pay Framework into APEC's structural reform agenda, particularly through the Economic Committee and PPWE, would signal a strategic commitment to dismantling entrenched labour market barriers that drive gender inequality. Building on the APEC Gender Equality Structural Reform Principles, which referenced pay transparency laws, this framework offers a complementary, voluntary pathway that economies can adopt to drive inclusive growth. Embedding it within structural reform discussions would enable uptake through Individual Action Plans and position it for consideration at future ministerial meetings, reinforcing gender equality as a core driver of productivity and competitiveness across the region.

APEC Dashboard Enhancement

There is also an opportunity for ABAC to coordinate with the Policy Support Unit to expand the Women and the Economy Dashboard metrics to include a section on gender pay gap reporting. As noted, currently that data isn't there. Perhaps by 2026 or 2027, after data collection, include:

- % of companies reporting GPG in each economy,
- median or mean GPG at economy level (from available data or surveys),
- presence of policies/incentives for pay equity in each economy.

Even if initially patchy, including it will drive economies to improve their data. Over time, aim for all 21 economies to have some reporting mechanism (voluntary or otherwise) that feeds into this. This will also allow tracking progress toward a target (for instance, APEC could set a target to reduce the average gender pay gap by X% by 2030, aligning with SDGs).

Synergy with La Serena Roadmap and PPWE projects

ABAC is well placed to partner with PPWE to co-sponsor capacity-building projects funded by APEC Women and the Economy Fund to explicitly support rolling out the framework. This could be facilitated through workshops on implementing equal pay reporting in APEC MSMEs or policy dialogues on incentivising pay equity across APEC. Funded projects can help maintain momentum with dedicated resources and ensure that MSMEs receive the expert support they need to build capacity and act on pay equity. ABAC should also ensure that the La Serena Roadmap mid-term review (around 2025/2026) highlights the Equal Pay Framework as a key deliverable under the "Workforce Participation" pillar.

Economy-Level Action Plans

Encourage each economy to develop a short action plan on how they will promote the framework within their local setting. This could be something ABAC economy members push in their domestic contexts. An action plan could list responsible agencies (e.g., Ministry of Labor or Gender, SME Agency, etc.), targets (like number of SMEs to reach in year 1), and local initiatives (e.g., integrating with an existing gender equality campaign, or launching economy-wide awards echoing the APEC

one). If each economy has a roadmap, APEC could compile these to share best practices or provide peer encouragement.

Monitoring and Reporting Back

Establish that ABAC will report back to APEC Ministers on this initiative annually for the first few years. ABAC can collect data via its members and partners: how many firms used it, notable outcomes, challenges encountered. A brief report or even a presentation at WEF 2026 and beyond will keep ministers engaged. It will also allow Ministers to exchange what their economies have done (embedding a competitive but collaborative spirit). Similarly, at ABAC's own meetings, keep equal pay on the agenda – e.g., have a progress review at each ABAC meeting cycle, including inviting MSMEs to share experiences directly with ABAC members.

Implementation Readiness

The ABAC Equal Pay Framework is now technically complete and ready for voluntary use by businesses across the region. It consolidates the methodological foundations, modular design, and reporting structure into a coherent and accessible tool. The framework has been tested through regional consultation, expert validation, and adaptation to the realities of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Its design is sufficiently flexible to support immediate implementation in economies with existing gender equity infrastructure, while still being accessible to those at earlier stages of reform.

However, full and effective rollout requires more than the framework alone. To drive uptake and impact, three key enablers must now be developed:

1. **A comprehensive toolkit** tailored to each participation tier, including calculators, templates, and user guidance.
2. **A digital platform interface** that hosts the framework in an interactive, accessible format for firms of varying capacities.
3. **Incentive mechanisms and visibility pathways** that reward business leadership and support structural reform goals, including links to procurement, ESG, and APEC recognition platforms.

Readiness to proceed is high from a technical and policy alignment perspective. What is now required is strategic investment in delivery and engagement infrastructure. Several APEC economies and ABAC representatives have already expressed interest in piloting the Framework, offering a strong starting point for rollout.

With leadership from ABAC and coordinated support through APEC platforms, the Framework can be launched in early adopter economies within the next reporting cycle. These early implementations will help refine the toolkit, test integration with economy priorities, and establish momentum across APEC.

Importantly, success breeds success. As participating firms begin to report reductions in their pay gaps, improvements in staff retention, or reputational gains, others will be encouraged to follow. Over time, the voluntary framework can evolve into a

recognised business norm: one where pay transparency, fairness, and gender equity are embedded as standard practice.

For APEC Ministers, Leaders, and business leaders, the message is clear: the tools now exist to take decisive action. Implementing the ABAC Equal Pay Framework will help close long-standing equity gaps while unlocking new sources of productivity, resilience, and economic growth. It is a concrete, credible step toward a more just and dynamic Asia-Pacific economy.

Implementation Pathway

To support the voluntary uptake of the ABAC Equal Pay Framework across APEC, three implementation pathways are proposed for consideration. Each reflects a different level of ambition, investment, and expected return. All maintain the core functionality of the existing framework and calculator while enabling action that aligns with political will, institutional capacity and available resourcing.

1. Low Impact – Maintenance and Dissemination (Foundational)

This approach focuses on maintaining the existing calculator with minor usability improvements such as updated guidance, interpretation tips, and sample entries. The tool would be hosted online and shared passively via ABAC and APEC channels, without further localisation or active engagement.

- **Benefits:** Low cost, rapid delivery, preserves technical infrastructure
- **Limitations:** Limited uptake and minimal data collection or visibility

2. Medium Impact – Targeted Pilots and APEC Platform Recognition

This option includes limited pilot testing in 2–3 willing economies, incorporating light localisation, basic training, and integration into existing APEC recognition platforms such as the BEST Award. The focus is on learning, showcasing early adopters, and encouraging voluntary peer benchmarking via anonymised data.

- **Benefits:** Moderate resourcing, visible early wins, supports case study development
- **Limitations:** Less scalable, data quality and comparability may be constrained

3. High Impact – Multi-Economy Pilots, Dashboard Integration and Incentives

This model scales implementation through coordinated pilots in up to five diverse APEC economies, backed by technical assistance and stakeholder engagement. It includes integration into the APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard, enabling firm-level, real-time, gender-disaggregated data. A three-tiered incentive system (certification, awards, and procurement or tax incentives) would encourage adoption and align with broader MSME support policies.

- **Benefits:** Highest likelihood of sustained impact, regionally harmonised data, incentivises action
- **Limitations:** Requires more resources, technical coordination, and political support

Each of these options advances the region's commitment to gender equality and inclusive economic growth, with the **high-impact model offering the greatest return on investment** through structural reform, private sector engagement, and improved data for decision-making.

Operationalising the Framework (phase two)

With the technical foundations of the ABAC Equal Pay Framework in place, phase two represents the critical operational stage: converting a well-designed voluntary tool into a practical, scalable platform that delivers measurable outcomes for businesses and economies.

This phase centres on empowering MSMEs to engage meaningfully with the Framework by investing in localisation, support infrastructure, training, and incentives. It also positions ABAC and APEC to generate firm-level, gender-disaggregated data, support policy dialogue, and embed equity into mainstream MSME development and trade facilitation.

Phase Two: Key Elements

- **Localisation and Accessibility:** Tailoring the calculator for each economy (language, currency, payroll systems).
- **Comprehensive MSME Toolkit:** Step-by-step guides, sample reports, sector case studies, communication assets.
- **Training and Technical Assistance:** Webinars, drop-in clinics, and in-economy partner support.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Coordination with SME agencies, women's business networks, and APEC fora (PPWE, SMEWG, Women in STEM/Trade).
- **Visibility and Incentives:** Linking participation to ESG frameworks, procurement advantages, and APEC/ABAC recognition platforms.
- **Governance Structure:** Oversight by ABAC coordination group, economy-level focal points, and regular progress reporting to ABAC and PPWE.
- **Timeline and Milestones:** A structured rollout with pilot testing, training, data dashboard integration, and peer benchmarking.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Success indicators include firm participation, data quality, practice uptake, and integration into APEC policy tools.

By investing in this phase, ABAC and its partners can move beyond policy intent to real-world implementation, creating a regional model for business-led gender equity reform. The result: enhanced MSME resilience, improved economic security for women, and stronger, more inclusive regional growth.

Appendix A: Estimated Economic Impacts of the Framework

This economic model estimates the potential increase in APEC GDP resulting from reduced gender pay gaps, based on three levels of MSME (micro, small and medium enterprise) engagement with the Equal Pay Framework: low, medium, and high. The model has been designed to be simple and credible, focusing only on the direct economic impact of equalising pay between men and women for the same work.

It does not include broader benefits such as increased household consumption, improved business performance, or higher female labour force participation. This means the figures presented are deliberately conservative, representing a baseline estimate of economic impact. The actual benefits are likely to be significantly higher.

Modelling Equation

Estimated GDP Gain (USD) =

- 0.5** (GDP increase per 1 percentage point wage gap reduction)
- × **0.0857** (estimated pay gap reduction)
- × **64.45 trillion** (total APEC GDP)
- × **MSME GDP coverage** (based on participation scenario)

Justification for Key Inputs

Wage Equalisation Impact on GDP: 0.5%

A 2022 study by the University of Canberra (*The Impact of the Gender Wage Gap on the Australian Economy during COVID-19*) estimated that a one percentage point reduction in the gender pay gap, from 17% to 16%, could increase GDP per capita by 0.5%. Eliminating the full gap (17 percentage points) could deliver an economic uplift of around 8.5%, or AUD 93 billion. This study provides an empirical foundation for applying a 0.5% GDP gain per 1 percentage point gap reduction in the APEC context.

This approach supports the use of **wage equalisation as a standalone economic lever**, even before considering broader benefits such as increased participation and productivity. The ABAC model builds on this precedent and includes:

- A focus solely on direct wage gains
- Use of a validated 0.5% uplift estimate
- Scenario-based MSME engagement modelling
- An assumed average wage uplift of **8.57%**, based on international evidence

Estimated Wage Increase: 8.57%

A 2023 honours thesis from Claremont McKenna College, *How Do Pay Transparency Laws Impact the Gender Pay Gap in the United States?*, analysed the effect of state-level transparency laws. Using fixed effects regression, the study found that after Colorado implemented its Equal Pay for Equal Work Act in 2021, women's wages rose by 8.57% compared to a control group in Washington State. This figure was derived after adjusting for demographic and economic factors.

The findings show that pay transparency laws:

- Encourage employers to review and correct wage disparities
- Create behavioural change even in voluntary frameworks
- Deliver measurable wage gains, especially in economies with an existing pay gap around 17%

This study supports the use of **8.57%** as a credible and conservative assumption for direct wage increases resulting from transparency-focused interventions.

APEC GDP: USD 64.45 Trillion

In 2023, the combined GDP of APEC economies was approximately **USD 64.45 trillion**, accounting for over 60% of global GDP. This figure is widely reported in official APEC and international economic data.

APEC's economic influence includes:

- 21 member economies at various stages of development
- Major global producers and exporters such as the United States, China, and Japan
- Significant intra-regional trade, innovation, and labour force participation
- A strong presence of MSMEs, which employ hundreds of millions of people

This GDP baseline provides a solid foundation for estimating the region-wide benefits of equal pay reforms.

Modelling MSME Engagement Scenarios

To estimate the share of APEC GDP affected by the framework, we model three levels of MSME participation. Each reflects a different degree of voluntary engagement:

Scenario	MSME Participation Rate	MSME Share of APEC GDP	Total GDP Covered
High Impact	6%	50%	3% of total GDP
Medium Impact	2%	50%	1.25% of total GDP
Low Impact	0.5%	50%	0.25% of total GDP

Rationale for Assumptions

MSME Contribution to GDP

Across APEC, MSMEs account for 97 to 98% of all businesses and contribute between 40 to 60% of GDP. We use a midpoint of **50%** for modelling purposes.

Participation Rate Estimates

OECD and UK data show modest uptake of voluntary pay gap reporting among smaller firms. In the UK, only 18% of medium-sized businesses conduct formal reviews. To reflect varying regulatory environments and limited mandatory requirements across APEC, we apply the following conservative assumptions:

- **High Impact:** 6% of MSMEs opt in, driven by incentives and visibility
- **Medium Impact:** 2% adopt, motivated by soft engagement and benchmarking
- **Low Impact:** 0.5% participate, reflecting passive diffusion

GDP coverage is calculated by multiplying the participation rate by the 50% MSME GDP share.

Final Economic Impact Estimates

Option	Wage Equalisation Impact	Pay Gap Reduction	APEC GDP	GDP Covered	Estimated GDP Gain
High Impact	0.5%	8.57%	USD 64.45 trillion	3%	~USD 82.85 billion
Medium Impact	0.5%	8.57%	USD 64.45 trillion	1.25%	~USD 34.52 billion
Low Impact	0.5%	8.57%	USD 64.45 trillion	0.25%	~USD 6.90 billion

Even with conservative assumptions and limited MSME participation, the economic gains from gender pay transparency are substantial. Under the High Impact scenario alone, APEC GDP could rise by over USD 82 billion. These estimates capture only direct effects, meaning the **true economic benefit is likely to be even greater** once broader macroeconomic improvements are considered.

Appendix B: APEC Standing in Global Gender Equality

Economy	Wage Equality Ratio ¹	Equal Pay Law ²	GNI per Capita (USD) ³	Gender Pay Gap (%) ⁴	GINI Coefficient ⁵	GDP per Capita (USD) ⁶
Australia	0.69	Yes	64490	13.4	0.34	72,760
Brunei Darussalam	0.67	No	32230	—	—	37,023
Canada	0.73	Yes	52960	16.1	0.33	84,276
Chile	0.7	Yes	16230	21.1	0.44	16,900
China	0.69	Yes	12850	22.0	0.38	13,000
Hong Kong, China	0.71	Yes	49660	18.0	0.39	55,000
Indonesia	0.64	Yes	4580	24.0	0.38	5,248
Japan	0.65	Yes	42940	23.5	0.33	39,000
Korea	0.61	Yes	35370	31.2	0.34	35,000
Malaysia	0.67	No	12160	21.0	0.41	14,423
Mexico	0.72	Yes	10960	16.0	0.45	11,000
New Zealand	0.76	Yes	48200	9.2	0.32	55,000
Papua New Guinea	0.6	No	2830	—	0.46	2,948
Peru	0.71	Yes	7020	20.0	0.43	7,000
Philippines	0.73	Yes	3950	10.3	0.42	7,754
Russia	0.75	Yes	12620	20.0	0.37	15,000
Singapore	0.71	Yes	65230	16.0	0.45	93,956
Chinese Taipei	0.77	Yes	33530	14.0	0.34	36,000
Thailand	0.72	Yes	7180	15.0	0.45	7,532
United States	0.74	Yes	76370	16.4	0.41	90,320
Viet Nam	0.7	Yes	4010	10.0	0.36	4,439
APEC Average	0.7	18/21	28351	17.7	0.39	33,504

Data Sources

- Wage Equality Ratio** – This indicator reflects the female-to-male ratio of estimated earned income for similar work and is derived from the **APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard (2023)**, based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Surveys. Source: APEC Women and the Economy Dashboard Report (2023)
- Equal Pay Law (Y/N)** – Indicates whether the economy has enacted legislation mandating equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value, as reported in the **World Bank Women, Business and the Law database** and reflected in the APEC Dashboard. Source: World Bank, [Women, Business and the Law](#)
- GNI per Capita (USD)** – Gross National Income per capita (Atlas method, current US\$) sourced from the **World Bank World Development Indicators (2023)**. Source: World Bank, [GNI per capita](#)
- Gender Pay Gap (%)** – Based on the median gender pay gap in hourly or monthly earnings, where available, from the **International Labour Organization (ILO) Statistics Database (ILOSTAT)**. Source: ILO, ILOSTAT Gender Wage Gap
- GINI Coefficient** – Reflects wage income inequality across the economy, based on hourly wage distributions, sourced from the **ILO** and cross-validated with the **World Bank World Development Indicators** where necessary. Sources: ILO, ILOSTAT Income Inequality and World Bank, [GINI Index](#)
- GDP per Capita** – This indicator reflects the projected nominal gross domestic product per person (in current USD) for 2025, based on IMF modelling and national statistics. Estimates are calculated using each economy's total GDP divided by population projections. Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database, October 2024 Edition

Note: Data for Brunei Darussalam and Papua New Guinea is incomplete or unavailable for some indicators. Supplementary insights (where referenced) are drawn from economy labour force surveys and UN Women Data Hub assessments.

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