

Special Conference 2 on Promoting Inclusive Societies

Developing measures to close the gender pay gap

London Region UCU • Fight for education

END THE GENDER PAY GAP



Strike for decent pay • Zero tolerance for zero hours



Forum:	Special Conference 2
Issue:	Developing measures to close the gender pay gap
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Introduction

The role of women in society, particularly in regions like Northern America and Europe, has considerably improved throughout the past century, however, there are still issues that women face. One very serious topic is the gender pay gap, which is the “*difference between women’s and men’s average weekly full-time equivalent earnings*”. In 2016 in the United Kingdom, full-time working women were paid 9.4% less than their male counterparts who were also in full-time employment. In the USA, women earn 77% of what men earn. A study showed that even eliminating all other factors to have both sexes perform the exact same task for the same amount of time still proved that females earn 9% less than their male counterparts. Some claim that the gender pay gap is non-existent, but the UNWomen entity push this statement aside and label it as untrue as there is too much evidence suggesting otherwise. Different methods exist to calculate the gender pay gap. This includes finding the annual pay of full-time workers and an example of an alternative method is adjusting the examination of the gap to the education level and occupation of the employees. Despite the many techniques and occasionally varied results, all the statistics point to one conclusion: there is a global gender pay gap, whether that is caused by discrimination or other factors. What makes this subject so complex is that every Member State of the United Nations has a different gender pay gap which has been caused by disparate factors. The gender pay gap still remains to be an extremely broad issue because when some countries may be debating about equal wages, others are questioning whether women should be in the workforce at all.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender pay gap

The difference between women’s and men’s average weekly full-time equivalent earnings, expressed as a percentage of men’s earnings. On a global scale, women earn 79 cents for every dollar that a man makes.

Discrimination

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex and it takes shape in the form of a behaviour. Examples of discrimination include harassment, like when someone makes offensive and inappropriate 'jokes' or insults directed at another person because of their gender, colour etc. The gender pay gap is partially caused by wage discrimination towards women.

Prejudice

Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. It is therefore an unjustified opinion and though it is similar to discrimination, prejudice involves more than just behaviour. A kind of prejudice is stereotyping people, an example of this being that mothers are thought to be less committed to their work than women with no children.

Stereotype

A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular group of people. Stereotypes are often learnt from family members, peers and the media. Not only are we influenced to form stereotypes but humans also find it satisfying to be capable of classifying certain people and hence being able to 'predict' their social behaviour.

Sexism

Prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex. Sexism is a major problem in need of addressing, as it negatively affects how the opposite sexes behave and think about each other.

Bargaining power

Ability of parties in a situation to exert influence over each other. At work, for instance, employees use their bargaining power to raise their salaries.

General Overview

History

In hunter gatherer times, men and women played an equal role within their communities. This gave the human race an evolutionary advantage because there was a bigger social network which resulted in a wider gene pool. When agriculture was discovered, however, a difference regarding the roles in society appeared between males and females, resulting in the inequality women have faced for centuries. Discrimination towards women has ranged

from no legal rights to full dependence on their partners. In 1869, the gender pay gap was raised into question for the first recorded time in the United States by a letter sent to the editor of the New York Times, which asked as to why women working in the US government were paid half as much as their male colleagues. During World War I, Northern American, European and Asian women were employed by industries which had a high demand for workers as men had gone to fight in the Great War. This included working in engineering, transportation, hospitals and agriculture (see Figure 1). During the Second World War in Japan, for example, women were strongly encouraged to take up male vacancies that included manufacturing and in pharmaceuticals. In the United Kingdom, female employment of the working age population grew from 23.6% in 1914 to 46.7% in 1918 (*Gender Pay Gap and the Struggle for Equal Pay*). The first British equal pay strike took place in 1918, where women demanded the same war bonuses as men. Though the UK's government acknowledged the strike, women were still thought to be less productive than men and hence did not receive an increase in their wages. In conclusion, the First World War turned the tables for working



Figure 1. “Female engineers in the UK in World War I”.
<http://www.vintagephotos.com/2014/04/vintage-photos-of-women->

women all over the world, yet a gender pay gap remains until this day.

Factors affecting the gender pay gap

Gender discrimination

There are various complex and interwoven socio-economic factors that affect the gender pay gap, one of these being traditions and stereotypes. The stereotyping towards women is often caused by the traditional thought that women should be the primary caretakers of their children. The authority of women is often undermined too as they are not considered to be as ruthless as men. Another unjust implication of prejudice against women is that

they are judged on their appearance more than the opposite gender are. A study done by Dr Graham Scott, a psychology professor from the University of the West of Scotland, has found that employers spend a longer time lingering their gaze on a woman’s outfit and face than on their actual job application.

In particular, mothers face scads of discrimination. If a mother is applying for a job then her starting salary is likely to be lower because the employer will be concerned of her capability to balance her domestic duties and work. Research performed by Cornell University even claims that mothers earn 5% less per child than childless women. Fathers, on the other hand, do not face such discrimination. According to the Cornell University, employers are more generous to fathers than to childless men by being increasingly flexible with their family and work balance as well as offering higher salaries. Fathers are excused for being late to the office on more occasions than employees who are not parents. This is because

JOBS WHERE WOMEN CONSTITUTE A MAJORITY

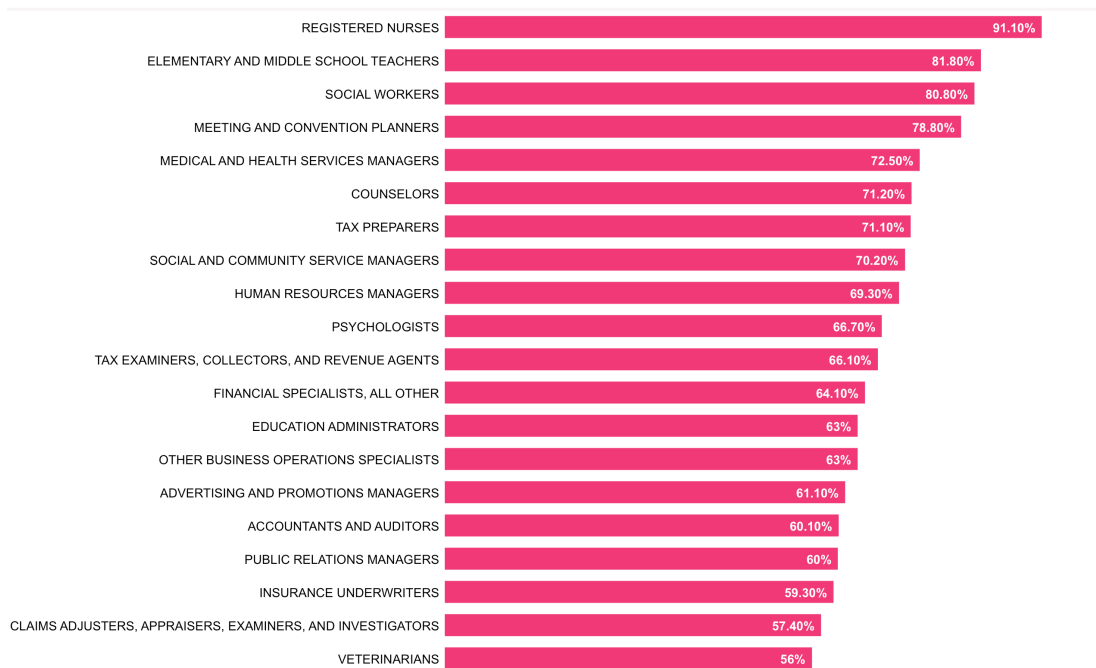


Figure 2. “Jobs were women constitute the majority”. In this model it is shown that nursing, primary and middle school education and social workers are fields where women are a majority. Unfortunately, these are also fields which are undervalued and provide poor salaries, particularly in comparison to other careers like engineering.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/pink-collar-jobs-dominated-by-women-2015-2international=true&r=US&IR=T>



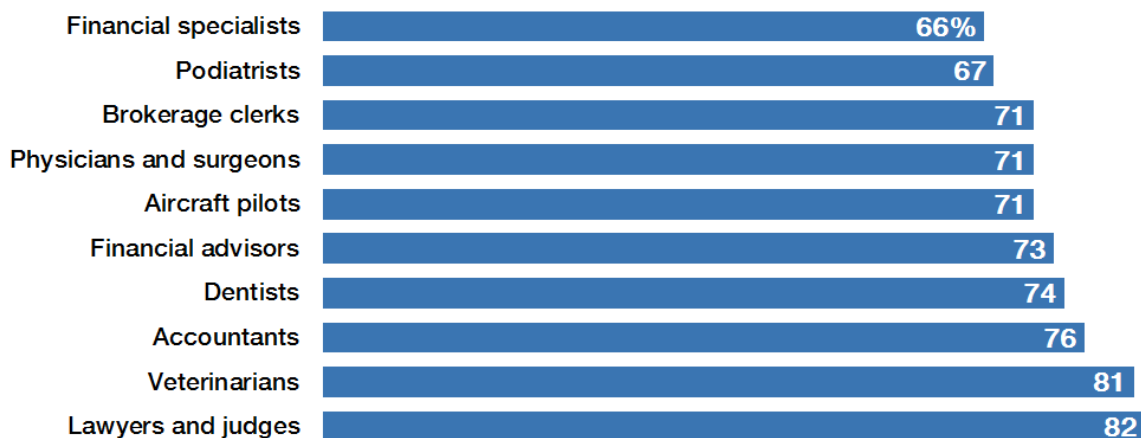
some employers believe that men with off-spring are more ‘committed’ and ‘competent’, making them appealing to hire.

Career choice

Women tend to lean towards choosing lowly paid career paths. Careers such as nursing, elementary and middle school teaching and social work are professions that are relatively poorly paid and where women constitute a majority. The question is as to whether these fields are badly paid just because that is the way it is or because women work there. There is evidence that these fields provide poor wages because of the second reason. Before the 1980s, computer programming was a female dominated job until males began outnumbering them. Immediately the prestige and pay skyrocketed. Another example are the earnings of supermarket workers. Cashiers (who are mainly female) are usually paid less than the employees who stack shelves (who are mainly male), even though the tasks require similar levels of skill. It can therefore be concluded that in general, when talking about female rights, the reason as to why certain jobs are undervalued is because they mainly employ women (see Figure 2). The simple answer to this problem is that women should choose higher payed work. The issue with this solution is that young girls do not pick jobs in education, nursing, midwifery, administration and retail with in a vacuum. They are influenced by exter-

The gender wage gap in some of the highest-paying jobs

After controlling for age, race, hours and education, 2014.



Source: Claudia Goldin, Harvard University

Figure 3. “Data representation of the gender wage gap in some of the highest-paying jobs”.
<http://www.vintag.es/2014/04/vintage-photos-of-women-war-workers-in.html>

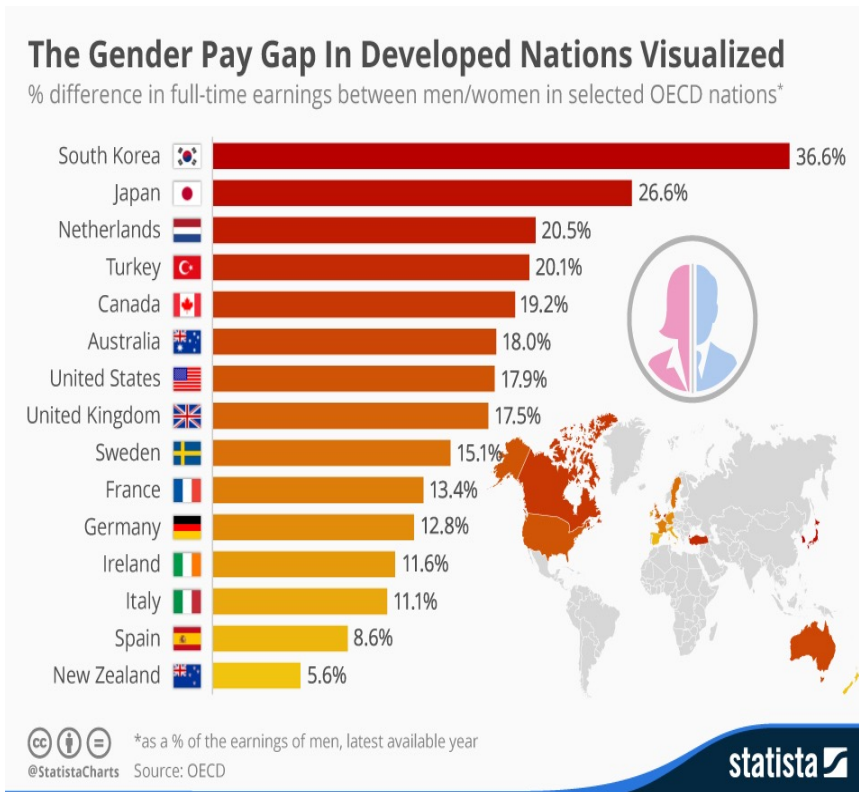
nal elements like their peers, family and/or teachers. Even when women do work in higher fields of work, their employers generally still decide to pay them less (see Figure 3 for the gender wage gap in the highest-paying jobs). In the United Kingdom, for example, female managers working in the financial service sector earn 39.5% less than their co-workers of the opposite sex.

Poor wage negotiation power

Yet another factor influencing the gender pay gap is the employer's attitude towards wage negotiating done by women. The Westpac International Women's Day report of 2016 claims that 60% of women never ask for a pay rise. This is presumably because of poor self-worth and little confidence which is commonly caused by their upbringing. Intimidation can also play a role when females choose not to negotiate. A woman may be intimidated by her employer and worry that if she demands for a pay rise, she will be fired all together. Sadly, this does happen as some employers do not appreciate women bargaining their earnings and may therefore penalise them. A newer study done by the Cass Business School in London in September 2016, however, suggests that women do actually ask for pay rises almost as often as men do but they just receive them less, as in general, they are 25% less likely to secure a wage increase (*Oswald*).

The current situation

Today, South Korea has the biggest gender pay gap out of all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries with 36.5% difference in male and female full-time earnings. With respect to the progress made in the past few decades, UN-Women predicts that the gender pay gap will only be abolished by 2069. That is a whole generation of women that still need to suffer from the consequences of this inequity. This is because globally, women still earn 79 cents per dollar a man earns. See Figure 5 for a choropleth map of which countries have the largest gender pay gap. Looking at the map, there has been little data collected in less economically developed countries. There is a very large difference regarding female rights across the globe. In Yemen, for example, the female to male income ratio is 30:100. To avoid becoming overwhelmed by this issue, the focus should be on eliminating the gender pay gap and not on other discrimination related issues regarding both sexes.



. "Percentage difference in full-time earnings between men/women in selected OECD nations".

[HTTPS://WWW.STATISTA.COM/CHART/4279/THE-GENDER-PAY-GAP-IN-DEVELOPED-NATIONS-VISUALISED/](https://www.statista.com/chart/4279/the-gender-pay-gap-in-developed-nations-visualised/)

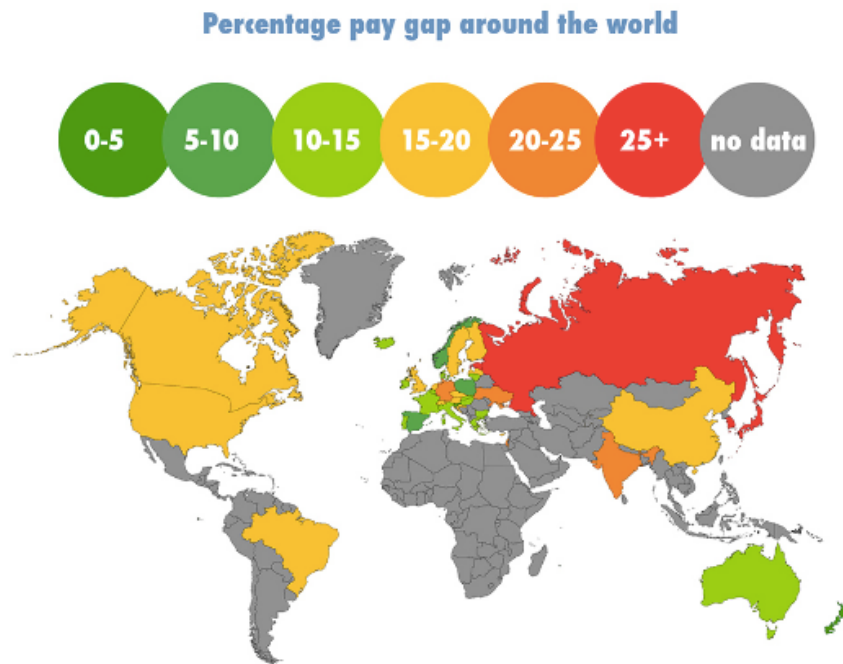


Figure 5. “Percentage pay gap around the world”.
[HTTP://TIME.COM/14153/GLOBAL-GENDER-PAY-GAP-MAP/](http://time.com/14153/global-gender-pay-gap-map/)

Benefits of eliminating the gender pay gap

A survey done by the Catalyst in 2017 shows that firms whose company boards consist of over 20% of women receive an average of 26% increase in the return of productive capital than what they did when they had less females occupying management positions. If the gender pay gap were to be reduced to a minimum, businesses will be able to recruit the best possible employees. If the skills of females start to be valued more, the economy will benefit as the allocation of resources will improve. Eliminating this form of gender discrimination can better the confidence of individual women, boost their motivation and reduce their chances of falling into poverty. Hereby the total percentage of people living in poverty in a country will decrease, aiding in meeting two of the United Nation’s sustainable development goals, which are to abolish poverty and achieve gender equality.

Major Parties Involved

United States of America (USA)

In the USA, President John F Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act in June 1963, which legally abolished the difference in wages between men and women. This treaty was signed as the females employed by working with sewing machines at Ford Dagenham protested and went on strike. Since then there have been improvements regarding the gender pay gap: in

1970 women earned 62% of a man's earnings, whilst in 2004 the number had improved to be 80%.

UN Women

UN Women is a fairly new body of the United Nations founded in July 2010. They have performed various actions with regard to female rights. In 2017, UN Women launched their Stop The Robbery campaign which aimed to raise awareness to that globally, women get paid 23% less than men. Their goal regarding the gender pay gap is to remove barriers, unlock opportunities for the gender facing the most discrimination at work, protect women in the informal economy, redistribute unpaid work and giving women the right to organise events.

New Zealand

Historically, New Zealand has been an active country in establishing female rights. In 1893, it became the first self-governing nation to permit women to vote in parliamentary elections. In 2016 their gender pay gap was at 12% which is a reduction of 4.3% since 1998. New Zealand is known to have one of the smallest gender pay gaps out of all the OECD nations. Despite this, the difference in men's and women's earnings still exists, which is why the Ministry of Women is collaborating with the State Services Commission to increase diversity in senior leadership and collecting information from public service organisations regarding their progress with closing the gap and more.

South Korea

South Korea has the worst and biggest gender pay gap amongst OECD nations as it is 2.5 times the OECD average. The most dominant factor growing their large earnings gap is women quitting their jobs for childcare, hence reducing the number of high-income workers. This usually happens when women are in their 30s and then later return to part time employment only in their 40s. Also, South Korea experienced a widening of the gender pay gap during the global financial crisis in 2008. Despite there being a significant increase in the female labour force participation rate, most women work in flexible and poorly paid occupations. All these factors build up to a high gender pay gap. The government of South Korea, however, is doing their best to reduce this in order to increase efficiency with in their economy. The Korean Ministry of Gender Equality & Family is providing certifications for companies who have family friendly policies, and today they have already certified 956 firms. Additionally, the government now pays 100% of the parental leave's salary rather than a mere 40% which they did before (*Korea Has Biggest Gender Wage Gap among OECD Nations*).

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of Event
1914-1918	World War I: in Northern America, Europe, Oceania and Asia, female employment rises due to the spike in jobs that men occupied prior to the war
June 1960	Equal Pay Act is signed by the former US President, John F Kennedy
July 2010	UN Women is founded
October 2016	Women in Iceland go on strike against the gender pay gap
November 2016	Women in France protest against the gender pay gap
March 2017	UN launches 'Platform for Champions'

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Platform for Champions launched by UNWomen (2017)
- 61st Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979 by the UN General Assembly)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

As seen above, there is a serious lack of UN involvement with the global gender pay gap. Though the issue has been present for centuries, it is a newer topic that until recently has not received any in depth research. To elaborate on the treaties mentioned above, the CEDAW is the most well known female rights convention. It defines forms of discrimination against women as well as sets up framework for national action. As the CEDAW was passed in 1979, it is an outdated convention. Passing another UN resolution on female rights, particularly about the gender pay gap, is therefore key for a sustainable future.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

A previous attempt to resolve this issue has been the implementation of minimum wage laws. A minimum wage is when there is a legally mandated price floor on hourly wages, below which non-exempt workers may not be offered or accept a job. Germany recently implemented this in the hopes of reducing their gender pay gap which has been one of the most severe within the European Union. Women have poor bargaining power when it comes to negotiating their earnings with their employers, particularly those who work in a more undervalued sector like childcare or retail. Increasing the minimum wage in turn increases the wage of low-paid workers (that are commonly women). This may, however, lead to unwanted consequences like employers releasing workers because of the raised costs of production, so a minimum wage law is not always the most effective solution.

Another previous attempt to solve the issue of the gender pay gap has been campaigning to raise awareness, such as the Stop the Robbery Campaign by UN Women. In November 2016 in France, a movement was held by many French women who protested against the gender pay gap, and their main message was that on average, French women work 38.2 more days a year for the same pay as men. A similar strike was held in Iceland in late 2016. The United Nations launched the 'Platform of Champions' in March 2017, which calls to close the gender pay gap. The Platform of Champions hopes to get support from policy makers by emphasising the importance of this issue. These types of protests and campaigns do raise awareness amongst people and gain media coverage but they fail to directly solve the problem.

Possible Solutions

A proposed solution to close the gender pay gap is to have policies that enable governments or human rights organisations review the payrolls of companies. This ensures transparency regarding the decisions made upon the earnings of men and women. Though

this solution seems good, firms should still have the right to privacy so this policy should be implemented in a non-provocative way.

Secondly, governments could subsidise childcare services, such as nurseries. Like in the United Kingdom and in many other countries, childcare is only covered when the child reaches a certain age. Since daycares and similar facilities are expensive, women often quit work to look after their children in order to save money. With subsidised childcare services, females can continue working without having to worry about the opportunity cost. Employers will look at females in a more positive light because there will be a higher chance of them staying committed to their work, hence increasing their possibility of starting with a higher wage.

Lastly, another solution is the 'paternity' leave. It is like maternity leave but instead it involves fathers being given paid time off work to spend with their newborn. Scandinavian countries are known to have implemented parental leave for both sexes and have seen some positive changes. In Sweden, for example, this policy has been in place since 1974. By enforcing companies to provide paternity leave, the roles in the household will be more equally divided, starting from the early stages of family life. If paternity leave becomes more widespread, employers will not prejudice women for being unable to juggle family life and work. Instead, if men and women are both given this opportunity, employers will be less inclined to offer women smaller salaries just because of the fear that females may become mothers and therefore be less committed to their career.

In conclusion, solving and eliminating the gender pay gap is imperative. When the gap is closed, firms will be able to recruit the best employees, gain the confidence of their workers, improve competitiveness and productivity and companies will have an improved public image with an increasingly content customer base.

Appendices

Appendix I

World Economic Forum: the global gender gap report.

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR16/WEF_Global_Gender_Gap_Report_2016.pdf.

Appendix II

BBC News: 6 ways to tackle the gender pay gap. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-37164297>>.

Appendix III

International Business Times: Three reasons why the gender gap is more complicated than sexism alone. <<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/three-reasons-why-gender-pay-gap-more-complicated-sexism-alone-1599241>>.

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