

## Gender Equality in Economics

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The World Economic Forum estimated that the gender parity globally may now be over one hundred and seventy years away. The estimated time in which the gender parity would be over was first eighty years and then one hundred and twenty years away. So why is the economic equality in gender becoming a slower problem to fix? Socio and economic changes cannot be made overnight, which could explain why the process of coming to more equality in economics is slowing. Gender equality in economics is not a new issue but is a current ongoing one. The gender pay gap has almost always existed, although it has shrunk in recent years. Nonetheless, there are men all over the world who have a salary that is significantly more than what a woman is making in their respective work fields. The gender employment gap is also significant in some countries around the world due to cultural beliefs about women working as well as social bias. Men are making more money and are having more opportunities to be employed in the formal workforce in comparison to their counterparts. The answer to why there is no gender equality in economics is not simple. However, there are some things that could help explain the circumstances in which women find themselves in that could help to shed light on this ongoing worldwide economic issue.

Gender pay gaps tend to generally be negatively correlated with gender employment gaps, according to ourworlddata.org. It is shown that there seems only to be a particular form of circumstances for women to be entering the workforce in these countries with gender employment gaps, such as not having a husband or children. Having only these specific

characteristics to be working as a woman does not show growing equality but instead shows its lack. Only being able to get a job as a woman when they are single and have no children does not help the economy enough. Women are good workers and can work as well as be married with children. Without having other women enter the workforce, there would be a lack of economic potential within the workforce, causing a decline in the potential economic value within these types of countries. According to research from the McKinsey Global Institute, if women were to participate in the economy identically to men, they could add as much as twenty-eight trillion or twenty-six percent to the annual global GDP in 2025. This amount is about the size of the present economies of the United States and China combined.

There are only six countries in the world that give women the same rights to work as they give to men, according to the World Bank study. The study aimed to highlight "how women must navigate discriminatory laws and regulations at every point in their careers, limiting their equality of opportunity." However, the study did not measure social and cultural factors, or how effectively laws were enforced. The six countries that got a score of one hundred or more were the countries of Belgium, Denmark, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Sweden. According to entrepreneur.com, countries in which their GDP is high have a higher female employment percentage, as well as more women in parliament compared to countries that do not have a high female employment rate. France was the country that improved the most out of the six that gave the same rights to men as women since they added laws to ensure justice with domestic violence, provided criminal penalties for workplace sexual harassment, and introduced paid parental leave. According to CNN calculations, if they were to use the same basis as the World Bank study, there would not be one hundred percent economic gender equality until at least the year 2073. Most countries only give women about three-fourths of the rights that men get when it comes to

employment. If countries were to give women the same rights as men, there would be a positive effect on other areas that are prone to being the cause of gender inequality in economics, as well as a direct impact on women joining the workforce. Laws need to be put into place to help push countries in the right direction. Having equality for gender in economics seems as though it would be suitable for all countries. However, lawmakers and governments are more focused on their pride and cultural beliefs than they are focused on the economic benefit for their country.

Education level also affects the gender pay gaps in many countries. Of all the illiterate people in the world, two out of three are women. Around the world, one out of four women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four will not finish primary school, according to [humanrightscareers.com](http://humanrightscareers.com). Women not meeting the educational qualifications for basic jobs puts them in a tough situation where they could potentially only find unskilled labor for low pay. Women not having the basic education that they deserve brings in the idea that it is necessary for someone to support them financially since they do not understand that they could potentially be able to support themselves. This would bring about early marriages in which the primary income of the household would be the husband's income, leaving the wife at home to do domestic work. Women are not educated on their options in many countries since their education is not valued. Women will not have as many options as men in the workforce since women do not always finish school, and they are not given the chance to show their intellectual potential because of it. Not allowing women to finish and continue school creates a gap in which the types of working availabilities for women are poor compared to the type of work men have available because of their superior education. Women who have an education are more likely to share unpaid work with men more equally, work in professional and technical occupations, and assume leadership roles. According to the UN Girls' Initiative, for every year of secondary school completed, a

woman is going to earn nineteen percent more in income and invest ninety percent of these earnings back into her family and investing in their future. Giving back to the future of the household would allow the future children of the family to get more education and, therefore, a better job because of it, leading to more economic growth.

Not being able to get transportation to work and school safely causes gaps in gender pay as well as gender employment in some countries. Being able to get to work or school safely is a significant factor that women and girls of all ages must think about. One survey focused on Middle Eastern and North African countries, and it found that men harass women in public "to put them in their place," according to weforum.org. Men have been found to be upset that women are taking on a new type of gender role and want them to stay in the background where they have been historically. Men having this bias is hurting the economy since women would be able to help even out the playing field in formal work environments and fill in gaps in which there is a need for new workers to participate in. Girls and women are afraid to go out and travel to work and school in fear of this kind of male harassment. Without access to safe travel, the gap in the employment of men and women will only grow. This will also affect the ability of girls to expand upon their potential because of their lack of schooling due to the lack of safe transportation methods. Without the schooling that girls could receive, the wage gap will continue to grow since they will not have the proper education to help them grow to their full potential. The governments that do not already have laws could have laws put in place to help protect women so that they no longer need to fear traveling alone. With these new laws, there would be a deterrence of men harassing women, causing women the confidence to continue education as well as continue or add a formal job to their workload.

Women are more likely to do work in the informal sector, according to weforum.org. In the informal sector of work, earnings are much lower, which contributes to the earning gap between women and men. The United Nations have stated the informal sector of work as "the fallback position for women who are excluded from paid employment. [...] The dominant aspect of the informal economy is self-employment. It is an important source of livelihood for women in the developing world, especially in those areas where cultural norms bar them from work outside the home or where, because of conflict with household responsibilities, they cannot undertake regular employee working hours". Having the informal work sector be the only place where it is socially acceptable for women to work traps women in an environment where they believe the only work, they are capable of doing is that of the informal sector.

This traps women and their daughters in a cycle of injustice where they see the informal sector of work as a great opportunity since they are not socially allowed to work elsewhere. This causes women to have their potential in the workforce stunted since women are also capable of other types of work but are not socially allowed to explore these outlets that would allow them to reach their potential. Having women only work in the informal sector of a country would stunt the economic growth in comparison to having women work in the formal workforce where they would have more income and, therefore, more money in which they could get out of poverty with or use it as more spending money which would boost the economy.

Another type of problem in which women are being given a lesser wage than men has to do with women's physical anatomies. Women give birth to children, and men do not. One problem with pregnancies is that they are not always planned. Birth control is a real problem around the world. Having access to birth control, a lack of options for birth control, or cultural or religious reasons to not have birth control all contribute to the two hundred million people who

do not want to get pregnant and are not using birth control, according to the World Health Organization. Helping to supply these resources as well as educate youth on safe sex would result in fewer unwanted pregnancies as well as raise the rate in which women do not have to leave the workforce to take care of a child. About forty percent of pregnancies are not planned, according to [humanrightscareers.com](http://humanrightscareers.com). Though about half of these pregnancies do end in abortion, that is not always an option or a want for the mothers. About thirty-eight percent of the unwanted pregnancies end in births, causing these mothers to be financially reliant on someone else or the state, making them lose their financial freedom. Women being pregnant would hurt their ability to work during parts of their pregnancy and could potentially not allow them to continue to work after their pregnancy if they could not afford childcare. Women are also not always guaranteed paid leave off work to have a child since there are not laws in every country requiring paid leave. So, having a lack of support from their employer might cause them to return to work too early and cause harm to themselves and or their baby. These unexpected children would force women to make decisions they would not want to make otherwise, such as marrying the child's father. The burden of unexpected children because of the lack of birth control available is more so put on the women than the men who were also in part of making the children, since they are the ones to physically give birth and are more likely to take care of them on their own if the father is not someone who they are in a relationship with. Pregnancies can even affect women's ability to keep their job since there are not laws in every country that prohibit the dismissal of pregnant women in the workforce. Unexpected pregnancies are even worse in these countries since there is not enough time to prepare financially before pregnant women would be fired.

Due to the number of women needing to take care of their children, they must arrange their schedules so that they can look after their children when childcare is not available. Their having to take out time for their children influences the amount of overtime that women would be allowed to work, if they are even able to work at all. In the effects of having children impacting participation in the workforce, ilo.org states, "In ASNA countries, it decreases the probability to participate by 6.2 percentage points; in developing countries by 4.8 percentage points; and in developed countries by 4.0 percentage points." So there is a small negative effect of having children and women working. In the same study, it was found in developing countries that there is actually a positive effect of women working in the workforce when they have children with about 0.7 percentage points. This is probably due to the need for more income since there are now more people in the house that need to be fed and clothed. These mothers may also need to have their children be watched by others. People leaving the labor market to care for their or others' children has them losing wages and having lower retirement benefits, and low-income families are limited in the amount they have available to pay for childcare, according to the World Bank. Between forty-three million to fifty-three million childcare providers are needed to meet the need for childcare globally, with poorer countries accounting for an estimated eighty percent of that need for childcare. The quality of childcare that children are receiving could also help the future of the children in these caregiving situations. Increased public spending on better quality childcare could help young children succeed in their future education and then in their eventual workplace as a result. Because they would be with better jobs, the jobs would lead to higher tax revenues for their countries.

Women and men have working roles that are socially associated with their genders, feminine roles, and masculine roles. Nursing would be an example of a feminine role, while a

lineman would be seen as a masculine role. Women are underrepresented in the industrial sector, which accounts for more than twenty-five percent of all male employment worldwide. Women in the industrial sector make up only sixteen percent of female employment. This sector tends to pay higher wages and benefits, and the gender employment gap actually appears to be widening in the industrial sector, according to [aflico.org](http://aflico.org). Meanwhile, the service sector tends to pay lower wages and offer fewer benefits, and it accounts for almost half of all female wage employment around the globe. Within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the service sector constitutes eighty percent of women's employment compared to the sixty percent of men in this type of employment. Agriculture, which is one of the most dangerous industries to work in, has more women workers than men worldwide. In this dangerous industry, women make up approximately seventy percent of the informal agricultural workforce, according to [alfcio.org](http://alfcio.org). With the socially gendered job types, there is an unfair advantage for the women trying to get into the feminine field and the men trying to get into the masculine fields. There is a complete disadvantage for women trying to get into masculine fields and vice versa. Having these roles seeming to be designated by society for one specific gender makes it hard for women to be able to get into industries such as the industrial sector, in which there are more benefits that are presented compared to that of the agriculture sector, which is primarily female, which contributes to the pay gap when considering benefits as a part of the salary.

The low representation of paid work is usually reflected in the high representation of unpaid work. Childcare, elderly care, cooking, cleaning, and other domestic tasks contribute to that of unpaid work. The unpaid work people do is vital, but it does not help with a country's GDP in the traditional sense. Unpaid care work is primarily done by women. The unpaid work is usually societally seen as a woman's job; men do not always help with unpaid work since they



see it as someone else's job to be doing. Women spend more than three times that of a man who does unpaid care work in a day, including that in which keeps the household functioning, according to osce.org. The shortage of time because of doing unpaid housework is something that most women have to face and sacrifice their careers for. When the unpaid care work is split between those in the household, more women are able to enter the workforce, men are able to have more family time as well as help in the house more, and the whole economy benefits since there will be more spending money in the household. Time spent on unpaid work contributes to overall welfare. However, that time could be rerouted to workforce participation with better infrastructure and public services or help from others in the household. Even those women who do work and take on high amounts of unpaid work could benefit from shared unpaid work by then having the opportunity to take on more intense roles in the workplace or a more intense job altogether.

Economic policies put into place are also affecting the workforce of women. Most of the policies that are being proposed or put into place are being looked at as gender neutral and not gender specific, especially those that deal with fiscal, monetary, and trade policies. Having there not be specific genders hurts women when these policies are being put into place. Policymakers are not thinking about the number of gender-specific workers in the specific industries in which their policies will apply most, for both paid and unpaid workers. An example given by the UN describes a reduction in social spending, which would then cause the demand for woman's unpaid household duties to increase since they do most of the unpaid work in households. The UN also describes how trade liberalization may negatively affect women's employment where they have an overpopulation in import-competing sectors of the workforce, such as agricultural crops for food. However, macroeconomic policies have paid little to no attention to these issues

and have continually not been operating under the views of supporting economic gender equality. Suppose labels of gender were to be put on the statistics and the policies in which policymakers discuss. In that case, there could be less confusion on whom they are affecting with these policies and therefore allowing the gender pay gap and gender employment gap to continue to close.

In conclusion, economic issues that deal with gender equality are not simple. Women make less than men for various reasons, including the unpaid working standard for women, laws that help to keep women out of the workforce, and social bias. Laws must be put into place to help push countries into having their citizens allow women to enter the workforce without fear of retaliation or being fired without reason. Without laws, countries' citizens will only continue to push their gender bias onto the next generations and so on, making the goal of gender equality in economics impossible. People must push off their gender biases so that women can come out of the framework that is unpaid domestic housework and go into the formal field of work if they choose to do so. Allowing women to choose their futures, especially in developing countries, will help countries in the long run since women will help raise the GDP since they will be able to choose to work without retaliation. Overall, there is no economically logical reason that women should be making less than men or having fewer employment opportunities than men. Women working only benefits countries' GDP and has almost no adverse effect, as long as unpaid work is distributed to more people than only the woman of the house. Women are half of the world's population, and when women do not work, there will be a worldwide loss of economic gain since only half of the world would be contributing to their country's workforces.

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