

<b>Forum:</b>	Human Rights Council
<b>Issue:</b>	Eliminating the 'wage gap' between men and women as well as finding measures to promote women in all workplaces
<b>Student Officer:</b>	Yi Fan Zhang
<b>Position:</b>	President of the Human Rights Council

---

## Introduction

The wage gap between men and women, or the gender pay gap (the terms wage gap, gender pay gap, and other variants of this phrase will be used interchangeably in this chair report unless otherwise stated), is the difference between the wages of men and women. A commonly reported figure is that women on average earn 77 to 80 cents for one dollar that men earn. However, this figure is *unadjusted*, meaning that it is a comparison of the average wages of all men and women meaning that it does not show us a nuanced picture.

It is undeniable that there *is* a difference between what men and women are paid however a few important distinctions must be made. While it is true that a reason for the gender pay gap is direct discrimination i.e. paying women less for doing the same job, there are a whole host of other reasons for why women are paid less. Reasons include the difference in working hours, segregation in the labour market, motherhood and career interruptions, engaging in part time work to balance family responsibilities, and so on.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Gender pay gap

The average difference between the wages of all men and women, that is to say it does not distinguish between the type of employment, industry, educational attainment, working hours, etc.

## Human capital

Human capital is a measure of the economic value of an individual, which is derived off their skill set.

## Key Issues

### Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination takes place when women are not compensated at the same level men are even though they execute work of the equal value. Although legislation in many nations prohibit this, the problem still persists. A reason for this may be the fact that women are perceived as less competent compared to their male counterparts given the same qualifications.

### Career interruptions

A survey from the Pew Research Centre finds that women were more likely to experience career interruptions to take care of a child or family member. The survey finds that 42% of mothers reduce their working hours and 39% of mothers have “taken a significant amount of time off [work]” to take care of a child or family member. 27% of mothers have quit their job to do so.

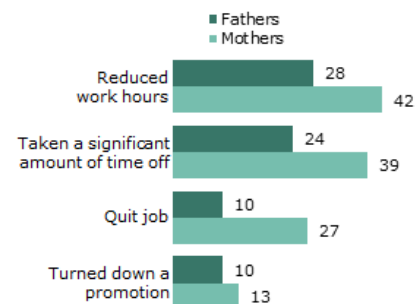
Neoclassical models of economics show that when people face career interruptions they cannot advance their human capital which leads to a fall in their productivity resulting in a subsequent stagnation in wages. Women face more career interruptions due to reasons such as pregnancy and being statistically more likely to have to take care of their children. This means that as their wages stagnate due to reasons delineated above the disparity between their wages and that of their male counterparts increase.

### Household responsibilities

Another survey from the Pew Research Centre finds that when it comes to taking care of children, the responsibility falls disproportionately on women. This is linked to what is said above about women taking time off work to take care of children.

### Mothers, More than Fathers, Experience Career Interruptions

*% saying they have ... in order to care for a child or family member*



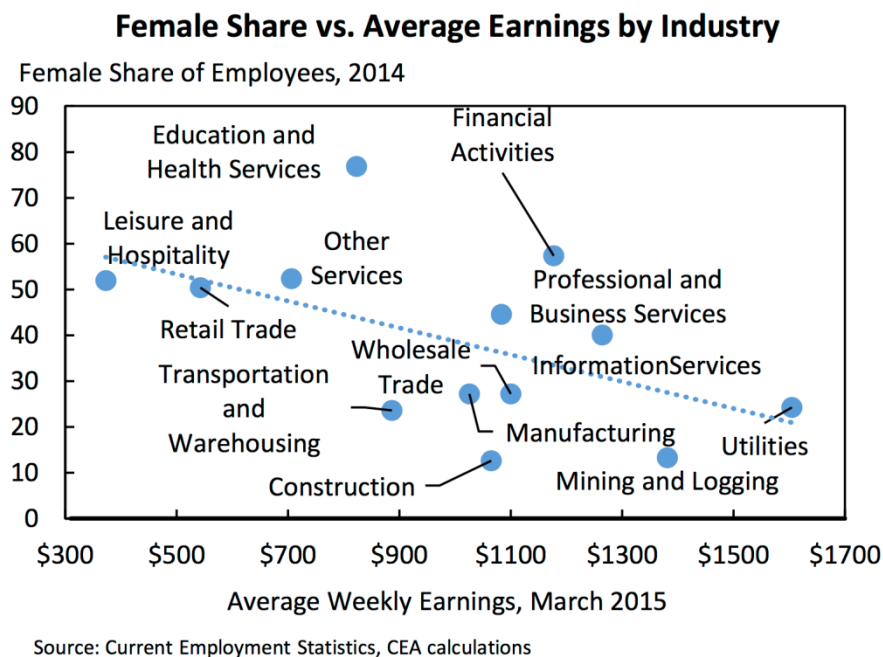
Notes: Based on those who have ever worked. "Fathers" and "mothers" include those with children of any age, including adult children (n=1,254).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Q56a-d

## Nature of employment

Part of the gender pay gap stems from the phenomenon of occupational segregation. Women are more likely to work in industries that have lower wages such as leisure, hospitality, and retail trade. They tend to be underrepresented in the industries with the highest pay such as information services and utilities.



Adapted from the White House Council of Economic Advisers Report on the Gender Pay Gap

## Full time versus part time employment

As touched upon earlier, women are more likely to hold a part time job compared to men. In Europe, about 32% of women hold a part time job compared to only 8% of men working part time. The shorter hours that women work results in a negative impact on career development.

## Senior management and leadership roles

There are fewer women in senior management and leadership positions in companies. In 2016, only 5% of CEOs in the largest publicly listed companies in the EU were female. Likewise, only 23% of board members in these companies are female.

## Societal attitudes

Gender roles that are reinforced in society through advertising and media influences may also factor into how employers perceive women in the workplace thus contributing to the gender pay gap.

## Major Parties Involved

### **The International Labour Organisation (ILO)**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is a UN agency “devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights”. One of their eight fundamental conventions is the 1951 Equal Remuneration Convention aimed at fair remuneration for work of equal value for men and women.

### **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women**

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women oversees the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Article 11 of the Convention deals with equity in the workplace when it comes to the right to work, equal pay for equal work, paid leave, and so on.

## Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
21 June, 1951	Adoption of the International Labour Organisation’s Equal Remuneration Convention
25 March, 1957	Signature of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Article 157 of the Treaty provides that each member state of the EU should ensure that men and women receive equal pay for work of equal value.
3 September, 1981	Institution of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
5 July, 2006	Passing of Directive 2006/54/EC: EU Gender Equality Recast Directive

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Under the CEDAW, Article 11(d) has provisions for “The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work”. Despite existing laws and

international conventions on fair compensation the problem of the gender pay gap still persists in virtually every nation.

The 2006 EU Gender Equality Recast Directive prohibits discrimination in relation to wages. Furthermore, people who have experienced discrimination on the grounds of gender when it comes to pay are able to “take legal action without the fear of retaliation from their employer”.

Austria’s National Action Plan for Gender Equality in the Labour Market requires companies to publish reports on equitable pay. The report is compulsory for companies that have more than 150 employees and aims to increase transparency on income and thus reduce the gender pay gap. Nations such as Belgium, France, and Spain require companies to produce plans to close the gender pay gap if there exists one in the company itself.

## Possible Solutions

A solution proposed by Claudia Goldin, an economist at Harvard University, is to implement policies that encourage flexible hours at work, moving away from a traditional 9-to-5 schedule, decrease the dependence on remuneration in particular segments of time, and increase worker substitutability.

Goldin’s research shows that occupations that allow for flexible hours have smaller wage gaps. Conversely, occupations that do not have a high degree of flexibility in working hours have larger wage gaps. This is the reason why pharmacists have smaller wage gaps compared to lawyers. The flexibility in working hours allow for women to deal with urgent every day life situations that would otherwise cause them to take time off work or reduce their working hours and thus compensation.

At the national level, policies that require companies to be transparent when it comes to pay equity between men and women should be continued (or instated where they are not).

Emphasis should be placed on increasing cooperation between governments, international entities, and businesses to promote fair remuneration. Delegates should note that government intervention / government policy solutions have unpredictable effects and may even backfire.

## Bibliography

Blau, Francine, and Lawrence Kahn. "Understanding International Differences in the Gender Pay Gap." *Journal of Labor Economics* 21.1 (2001): 106-44. Web. 15 Jan. 2017. <<http://www.nber.org/papers/w8200>>.

Goldin, Claudia. "A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter." *American Economic Review* 104.4 (2014): 1091-119. Web. 14 Jan. 2017. <[https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/goldin/files/goldin\\_aeapress\\_2014\\_1.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/goldin/files/goldin_aeapress_2014_1.pdf)>.

H., Joshi. "The Wages of Motherhood: Better or Worse?" *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 23.5 (1999): 543-64. Web. 14 Jan. 2017.

"Human Capital." Investopedia. Investopedia, LLC, 27 Feb. 2015. Web. 14 Jan. 2017. <<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/h/humancapital.asp>>.

Kliff, Sarah. "The Truth about the Gender Wage Gap." *Vox*. Vox Media, Inc., 01 Aug. 2016. Web. 14 Jan. 2017. <<http://www.vox.com/2016/8/1/12108126/gender-wage-gap-explained-real>>.

Kurtz, Annalyn. "Equal Pay: 5 Things You Need to Know." *CNNMoney*. Cable News Network, 8 Apr. 2014. Web. 14 Jan. 2017. <<http://money.cnn.com/2014/04/08/news/economy/equal-pay/?iid=EL>>.

Moss-Racusin, C. A., J. F. Dovidio, V. L. Brescoll, M. J. Graham, and J. Handelsman. "Science Faculty's Subtle Gender Biases Favor Male Students." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109.41 (2012): 16474-6479. Web. 16 Jan. 2017.

Patten, Eileen. "On Equal Pay Day, Key Facts about the Gender Pay Gap." *Pew Research Centre*. Pew Research Centre, 14 Apr. 2015. Web. 14 Jan. 2017. <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/14/on-equal-pay-day-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-gender-pay-gap/>>.

"Pay Equity & Discrimination." *Pay Equity & Discrimination* — IWPR. Institute for Women's Policy Research, n.d. Web. 14 Jan. 2017. <<http://www.iwpr.org/initiatives/pay-equity-and-discrimination>>.

“Raising Kids and Running a Household: How Working Parents Share the Load.” Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project. Pew Research Centre, 04 Nov. 2015. Web. 14 Jan. 2017. <<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/11/04/raising-kids-and-running-a-household-how-working-parents-share-the-load/>>.

“What Are the Causes?” European Commission. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Jan. 2017. <[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/causes/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/causes/index_en.htm)>.