



Tri Pro English READING:
The Gender Pay Chasm

Although equal pay for men and women has been a legal requirement in the UK for over forty years, men still earn far more than women. To address this problem, large companies were recently told to publish their pay statistics, and it is now clear that the pay gap is caused by more than simple discrimination. It seems we have to look at the roles women play in society in general, and how we value these roles. Today we're going to have a look at some of the many factors which contribute to the gender pay gap.

Motherhood is an obvious and important factor. Women leave the workplace to have children, often just at the age where their male counterparts are being promoted and given more responsibility. When mothers return to the workplace, they will almost certainly have to balance childcare and their working responsibilities. These often competing priorities can leave mothers seeming less "committed" to their jobs than women without children or men. This can mean fewer pay rises, less bonuses, and fewer promotions. There are, of course, some men who take an equal or even major share of the childcare but they are by far in the minority.

Aside from caring for children, statistics show that women are the main carers for other family members. Unwell siblings and elderly parents tend to be cared for by women. When women take on these responsibilities they often cut their working hours, and look for flexible employment options. In fact, Europe, 32% of working women work part time, in comparison with 8% of men. Part time workers are paid low hourly rates, and have less legal protection than full time workers.

Research still shows a gender gap when it comes to housework too. Effectively, women help men save time and energy on housework, which they can then dedicate to their paid work.

60% of university graduates are women, but they are underrepresented in degrees which often lead to high paying work such as engineering and computing. Many people say that this is due to individual choice, and women simply prefer other subjects. In reality it shows that the type of work which women do is not highly valued. Caring, educating and service roles are not well remunerated. It's clear this is important work, but roles which are traditionally female are generally paid less well.

Psychological experiments have shown that people recruit and promote people like themselves. Male employers tend to employ and promote other males, and sadly this kind of "natural discrimination" also seems to apply to race.

The good news is that the pay gap between men and women is smaller for younger women. This might be because these women have not yet had families and not yet taken on the responsibilities of caring, or it could be a positive sign for the future. Only time will tell.

True or False:

1. A law enforcing the right of equal pay to men and women was created 40 years ago.
2. A small number of men take more responsibility for childcare than women.
3. Women choose to reduce their hours to care for family members.
4. Men still do less housework than women.
5. Women are paid less because their work is less important.
6. There is a recruitment bias which favours men.
7. The smaller pay gap between younger men and women is almost certainly because these women haven't yet had families.

Gap Fill:

1. The “_____” is the term used to describe the difference in wages, on average, between men and women.
2. Childcare and work responsibilities are _____, and it can be difficult for women to find a balance.
3. Many women choose to _____, in order to meet the care needs of their families.
4. _____ are examples of traditionally male degrees, which tend to lead to well paid jobs.
5. Some employers don't like to _____ female employees to high level positions, it is said that these women “hit the glass ceiling”.

Discussion:

Is there a gender pay gap in your country? Why?

Do you think there is a glass ceiling in your country?

Have you ever experienced or witnessed discrimination in the workplace?

Do you think the work that people do with technology or finance is more important than work educating or caring for people?

What could be done to reduce the gender pay gap?