

Women, work and the gender gap

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To approach the gender gap issue, we first have to consider that the labour market is undergoing one of the most important changes in its history: a historically record number of women are entering the paid workforce, for example, in the countries involved in our project (France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Ireland) the percentage of women between 15 and 64 years of age working in salaried jobs is between 50% and 69%.

This has meant, on the one hand, that many women have been able to be in control of their economic affairs, which is one of the foundations on which all other rights are based; access to paid work has encouraged an increase in autonomy and the process of empowerment.

Indeed, without a paid job it is very complex to break away from an abusive partner, explore one's sexual identity, acquire the means to decide on one's reproductive life, or plan a future for themselves.

On the other hand, when women enter into paid employment they do not do so on equal conditions with men:

- women are universally paid less for equal and equivalent work and this gap is amplified by factors such as age and ethnicity;
- the labour market and the laws regulating it, usually do not adapt to women's biological maternity needs;
- the labour market and the laws that regulate it, as a rule, do not adapt to women's biological maternity needs;
- lastly, not all sectors are open to women, which means that they are excluded from some areas of work either because of their low interest in some fields or because of some strongly deep-rooted stereotypes that relegate them to so-called feminine jobs.

These jobs can be described as having the following characteristics in common: low pay, low-status professional sectors, and no access to places of power within companies.

It must also be considered that a large part of everyday work goes unrecognized and is not included in official estimates.

We are referring to informal work, unpaid work, child and dependent care, and housework, all these activities constitute an invisible workload.

This unpaid work affects women's lives more than men's: if we take into account all the work needed to support families and individuals, if we count household chores and raising children, everywhere in the world, women work on average 60% more than men, yet still earn less.

'Time poverty' is being increasingly recognized as a factor in women's power loss.

As already pointed out, everywhere in the world, women's salaries are lower than men's, and everywhere this gap increases with age and ethnicity.

One of the key elements of this gap is discrimination: despite some countries having recently enacted equal pay laws, women are still paid less than men for the same work, and they are not given the same promotions and career opportunities.

The overall gap does not stop there: women's earnings are lower because women are concentrated and segregated in typically low-wage jobs; women work more frequently part-time; and the aforementioned imbalance of responsibilities at the expense of women for family care is frequently the cause of career breaks, sometimes for many years.

When women retire, the wage gap follows them in the form of the social security pension gap.

It should also be considered that in many parts of the world, women are not entitled to any pension plan because they are the largest labour force in sectors of the unregulated

economy with little or no wages such as street vending or selling homemade goods and services.

This was only a brief and partial overview of the gender gap in the labour market, which the feminist movement often describes as being somewhere 'between a sticky floor and a glass ceiling'.

Here, we want to try to break the glass ceiling and mend the gap.

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