



CSW Chair Report

Addressing the Growing Issue of the
Gender Pay Gap

Chair: Emilie Yeh

Deputy Chair: Victoria Kress

Personal Statements

Chair – Emilie Yeh

Honourable Delegates,

I am currently in 10th grade at ACS International School Hillingdon. I am French, Danish, Taiwanese, and British, and I am honoured to be your chair of the Commission on the Status of Women at this forthcoming annual session of MUNISS alongside my lovely deputy chair Victoria Kress. I attended my first conference in grade 9 last year and have since attended 2 other conferences including THIMUN this January. We hope to keep the debates fruitful and keep you all motivated.

I look forward to meeting you all!

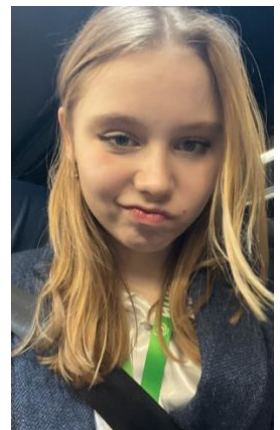


Deputy Chair – Victoria Kress

Honourable delegates,

I'm Victoria Kress, I'm 14 years old and in 9th grade at the International School of Stuttgart. I'm British and German. This will be my 4th MUN conference, but my first time as chair. I'm really looking forward to meeting new people at the conferences and being deputy chair to Emilie.

I can't wait to listen to some interesting debates and fill up the gossip box with you guys!



Introduction

“Equal pay for equal work.” When hearing politicians speak about closing the gender pay gap, this phrase is often heard in their speeches. However, researchers theorize that women are just being paid less because they don’t work equal hours or as high-paying jobs as men. There are many things that could be an obstacle to anyone’s workday, but often these obstacles are magnified for women. Examples of reasons why women are paid less than men are limited work hours due to having to take care of children and households, possible absence for pregnancy leave, a lower quality of education limiting women to lower-paying jobs, underestimation of their skills and sexist companies choosing to hire men over women.

Some possibilities to solve the gender pay gap are encouraging parental leave for not only women but also for men, offering more education and training for women to reach higher-paying jobs, encouraging a better distribution of household work and childcare, and educating women on how to correctly estimate their value in the workplace and negotiate their salaries based off this.

Closing the gender pay gap would not only give women and men greater balance in society and decrease future discrimination, but it would also be better economically, as it has been proven by McKinsey research (2019) that companies benefit from gender and racially-diverse leadership and employment.

Glossary

The gender Pay Gap is the relative difference in the average gross hourly earnings of women and men within the economy. (GPG)

Sexism is the prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, based on their sex.

Issue Explanation

For every dollar a man makes, a woman earns 84 cents. (Haan, 2024) A widely spread statistic, it is the baseline of knowledge when it comes to the gender pay gap. However, this statistic varies according to the ethnicity of the women and the country in which they are working. A growing issue, the GPG impacts individuals, families, and society as a whole. To determine the causes of it we can create the following categories: workplace dynamics and preferences, level of education and experience, and lastly, societal structures and biases. To solve the overall problem of the GPG we must first focus on the underlying issues in detail. Starting with workplace dynamics and preferences, some problems contributing to the gender pay gap are:



- Women applying for part-time jobs. There are multiple reasons why women might not be able to or want to work full-time. An example is the pressure on them to look after their household, and possibly children, women do not have as flexible work hours and need to take part-time jobs.
- Women applying for low-wage jobs instead of continuing their education for a better job. Due to how they are raised, a lot of women end up never reaching their full potential in school and are conditioned to apply for lower-paying jobs.
- Over- and under-representation of women in different workplaces. Only around 35% of higher-paying jobs are taken by women (Pew Research Center, 2023), whereas around 88% of childcare workers, jobs that usually pay less and have fewer promotion possibilities, are female (Zippia,2023).

Moving into the level of education and experience, we can determine the following issues:

- Barriers when attempting to complete higher education. Cultural expectations, a lack of role models, and unconscious bias are all obstacles when women try to get a higher education. Especially in fields concerning science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), women are discriminated against and discouraged from pursuing a career path in that direction.
- Interrupted work experience. Since a lot of parental responsibilities are given to women, they are more likely to take time off work to care for children. This results in a certain unreliability in work experience and lowers not only an individual's earnings but also creates a bias in recruiters as they expect a lot of women to need more time off.

Finally, another crucial category is societal structures and biases. As stated above, there are many prejudices set against women due to the generalization of individuals. Other issues in this category include:

- Certain jobs are assigned to a specific gender. A lot of our vocabulary such as "cleaning lady" or "policeman" is harmful to the opportunities provided to women. Although there are neutral versions of these terms, they are often used less than the ones that specify what gender the job is "meant for".
- Not getting chosen for promotions. Men are often chosen for promotions as they are more likely to ask for one and face less backlash about being more direct about what they want.
- Having to work harder to achieve the same. Due to some biases that women are more likely to be wrong or not as smart, they have to work harder to prove themselves, while still getting paid less than a male co-worker.
- Harassment and other hostile work environments. Women in the workplace have another factor decreasing their enthusiasm for certain jobs. Different forms of harassment are common in a workplace, especially one where a woman is rather alone in an environment filled with men.

All of the factors above contribute to the gender pay gap. To eliminate it, we need to focus on promoting a healthier work environment and removing any harmful mindsets.



Ways to do this could be encouraging regular reviews of pay practices, advertising the benefits of diversity in the workplace, providing women better access to higher education, and further supporting women in higher-paying jobs. Efforts to balance household chores and childcare between both parents would also be beneficial to close the GPG. These efforts can be made by encouraging paid family leave for mothers and fathers alike, as well as providing affordable childcare. By taking these measures, it is possible to make progress towards closing the GPG, leaving us with benefits such as a better economy, equity and fairness in the workplace, and a more diverse and open way of living.

History of the Topic

Emerging as a political issue in the US in the 1860s, the GPG was not taken seriously until women were allowed to vote in some countries in 1920. In 1944 there was an attempt to pass a law that discriminating “against any employee, in the rate of compensation aid, on account of sex” was illegal in the US. However, this did not pass, and women continued to suffer from the GPG. In the 1960s there was the next attempt, and this time, it was successful. A law forbidding the different wages between men and women for “jobs the performance of which requires equal skill, effort, and responsibility, and which are performed under similar working conditions.” (U.S. EEOC, 1963) In the 1970’s and 80’s, there was a breakthrough in the mindset of the public, and the Equal Pay Act was passed. Now, with more publicity and greater advocacy for equal pay, the GPG has closed around 20% in the past 4 decades (Aragão, 2023). At the rate it is closing right now, the GPG is estimated to close in 2088 (Zippia, 2023). However, this estimation is only true for more developed and democratic countries. In countries where women are oppressed overall there is not as much progress with the GPG. With the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, women are severely discouraged from working at all and any progress that had been made in that country regarding equal pay and representation in parliament has been erased to almost zero. This wide range of the different GPGs helps us focus on what is different about those countries and what could be changed to close the GPG as quickly as possible.



Any Previous Attempts

Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC)

A collaboration between the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Women, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), its mission is promoting “equal pay for work of equal value” (EPIC, 2021). They are attempting to close the GPG by 2030. Through research and advocacy for equal pay, they try to provide women with equal pay and equal opportunities.

Rules Passed by the European Parliament on the 30th March 2023

“If pay reporting shows a gender pay gap of at least 5%, employers will have to conduct a joint pay assessment in cooperation with their workers’ representatives. Member states will have to put in place effective, proportionate, and dissuasive penalties, such as fines, for employers that infringe the rules. A worker who has suffered harm as a result of an infringement will have the right to claim compensation.”(Kontoulis and Kolinska, 2023)

Equal Pay Act

Volume 29 of the United States Code, at section 206(d): The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits any sex discrimination in the payment of a job. This is one example of a law passed to minimize the gender pay gap. When it was signed, women were earning only around 59 cents per dollar a man. Now, this has increased by 20% with women earning 84% of a man’s wage. If it has taken 40 years to achieve this, more measures must be taken to speed up the process of the closing of the GPG.

Involved Parties

The GPG is a global issue however, some countries have done better at trying to solve it than others. Below is a ranking of extremity. The number behind the country shows how much more a man makes than a woman (rounded).

Countries at large interest

List of countries with a very large GPG and/or very few rules to enforce equal pay:

Nigeria (77%); **Iran** (82%); **Afghanistan** (>84%)

Something these countries have in common is the overall inequality and underrepresentation of women.

In Nigeria, only 3% of seats in the Senate and 4% in the House of Representatives are women (Nkereuwem, 2023). With few politicians being women, there are not many people to advocate for the closing of the gender pay gap.



Due to religion in Iran, women are oppressed in different ways, one being often needing permission from their husbands to be able to do something, like applying for a job. (Davidson, 2015) This makes it difficult for women to occupy largely influential roles in politics. Without that large influence in the political aspect, women are not able to fight for the correction of the GPG.

In Afghanistan, the GPG is so high because women are severely oppressed by the Taliban. Restricted from leaving their houses, denied education, and usually prohibited to work are three discriminations women face. (medica mondiale, 2023) These contribute to the low number of Afghan female labor force participation, which directly affects the GPG.

Countries at interest

List of countries with a GPG above 20%:

South Africa (35%); India (36%); Russia (24%); Argentina (21%); Japan (21%)

In this list of countries, we can see a variety throughout the globe. This means they all have separate reasons for a high gender pay gap.

In South Africa, the GPG is higher due to the lack of education provided to women, which limits women's opportunities to work in higher-paying fields.

In India, there are many causes of the GPG, depending on class. In lower classes, women are more likely to stay home to take care of children, in higher classes, women are less likely to occupy important jobs, due to unequal treatment from the employers. (Benu, 2023)

In Russia and Argentina, the GPG exists due to the jobs that women traditionally occupy. Women in both countries are overrepresented in fields such as education, childcare, or secretarial jobs, which are paid less in general. However, this overrepresentation has little to do with the level of education women in Russia and Argentina receive but rather is a cultural issue.

The GPG in Japan exists mainly because of the sexism opposed to women in the workplace. While men are treated by employers as future leaders, women are treated as plain workers who are inferior to men. (Evans, 2023)

Countries with a smaller interest

List of countries that do not have a significantly large GPG, but could easily decrease it (above 10%):

Switzerland (18%); Australia (19%); France (14%); United States (18%);

Germany (18%); United Kingdom (14%); Netherlands (13%); Ukraine (19%);

China (13%); Sweden (11%); Norway (15%)

The countries on this list are considered rather developed and modern. This concept includes the progression of the legal aspect of the GPG. These countries all have similar laws attempting to minimize discrimination in the workplace due to sex. An issue holding these countries back from minimizing the GPG as much as possible is the societal belief that women are the primary caretakers and men the primary breadwinners. However, these beliefs are being addressed and younger children are learning that the roles of breadwinners/caretakers can be taken by any gender. This is important for future generations to continue the closing of the GPG.



Countries with minimal interest

List of countries that have almost managed to close the GPG entirely (under 10%):

Italy (5%); **Canada** (9%)

These two countries are doing their best at closing the GPG, due to the legal framework enforcing the equal treatment of women and men, societal acceptance of women in leadership roles and men in caretaker roles, and family-friendly policies supporting parental leave and accessible childcare. These are all solutions to the GPG, and although they may need to be adjusted to every country, they give hope to closing the GPG within the next decade. (Eurostat, 2024)

Media Contribution

Media is a great way to raise awareness among many different people at once and advocate for change. However, it can also be a very harmful influence, especially on topics like the gender pay gap. The portrayal of traditional household roles can encourage internalized sexism within children. Secondly, the media often has toxic attitudes towards highly successful women, with people shaming them and saying they didn't deserve it. Sexist influencers can also encourage a toxic mindset in young people. Furthermore, the media can influence how seriously the GPG is portrayed. If it is downplayed or not covered enough, people will dismiss it far too quickly and it will never be resolved. However, if the media is used positively to advertise change and encourage women (and men) to stand up for a woman's right to be paid equally, it can provide a positive outcome.

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