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Wednesday March 21st 2012



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Working women

Still struggling

Nov 25th 2011, 14:34 by The Economist online

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Women have made huge progress in the workplace, but still get lower pay and fewer top jobs than men

SINCE 1970 the proportion of women in the workforce across the rich world has increased from 48% to 64%, a sharp rise but one which nevertheless leaves women in rich countries underemployed compared with women in China. There are large variations from country to country, but the broad trend in most places is still slightly upwards. Yet while women have made big strides in all kinds of careers they find it harder than men to bag the most senior jobs. Just 3% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women. And despite sheaves of equal-pay legislation, women still get paid less than men for comparable work. This week's [special report](#) explores the reasons why progress seems to have stalled and what can be done about it.

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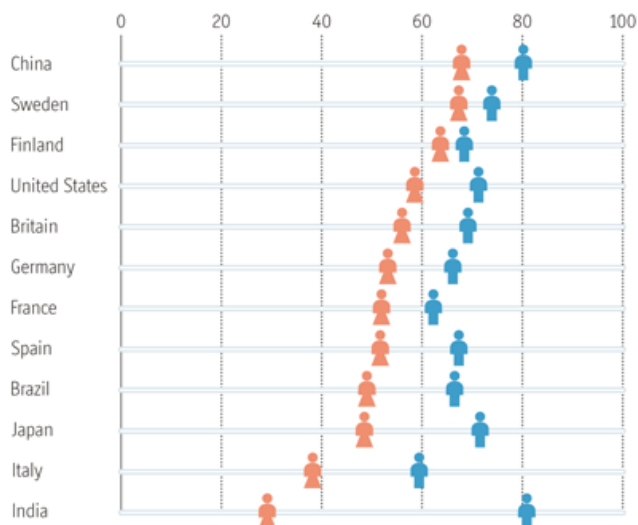
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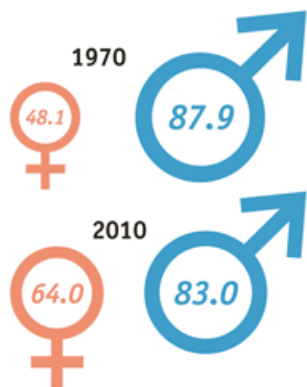
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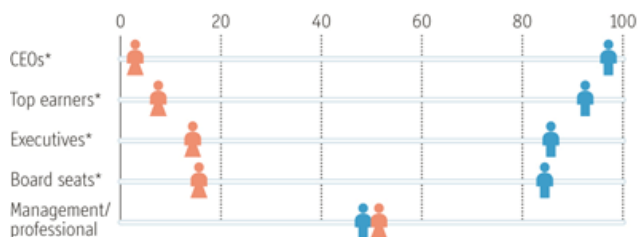
Labour-force participation rate, 2010, %



OECD average, %

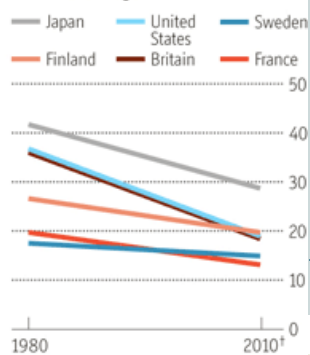


Women in business, US, 2010, %



Wage gap

Difference between average earnings of full-time male and female employees % of male earnings



Sources: ILO; OECD; Catalyst Research

*Fortune 500 companies †Or latest available

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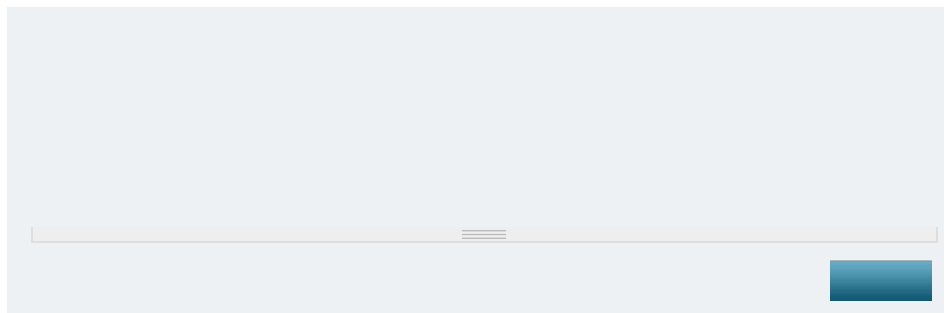
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guest-wnoneao

December 12th 2011, 16:12

I find it ironic that an article about the role of and challenges facing women in the work place, would use a figure with a skirt to represent women in some of the charts.

One of the stereotypes women are still fighting is that they should dress in skirts and not engage in activities that can't be done in a skirt.

Why not use 'M' and 'W' or just different color circles with a legend?

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guest-iaajos

December 5th 2011, 13:49

This is a very well written, well researched article. It misses however a few next step logic points. Yes a lot of women now earn, but many from home. Yes a lot of women earn but many part-time, and technically if you earned \$1 a year the stats would list you as a woman who earned outside the home. Therefore we must be careful when we look at 'trends' for exaggeration. Many women would prefer to be home full-time and are there as much as they can be, avoiding the daycare option even if it is heavily subsidized by government. Those who use sitters, grandma, even nannies are choosing to not use daycare, and for a reason. The other point is that in Nordic countries tax rates have skyrocketed to pay for daycare for those who do use it and though the 'gap' between wages of men and women is low, that it not full progress. The gap between women who earn and women at home is now huge. We have just morphed what the equality problem is. To value women's work' we have to enlarge the definition to include, value, respect, fund care at home. Birth bonus, income splitting, universal mat benefits, universal funding per child till age 18. First step though would be to get rid of those ludicrous sexist expressions like 'working woman', 'working couple' or 'stay-at-home mom'. All women work, moms with kids at home usually are away from home taking them to museums, parks and actually get the kids out and about way more than the daycares do. We need to redefine work to not insult women's traditional roles which are in fact 1/3 of the GDP if counted.

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Lyda TX

November 28th 2011, 22:37

I do not think I have ever (or rarely) seen a woman with blackened hands repairing cars in a auto shop, or building roads in the hot sun, or driving yellow bulldozers.

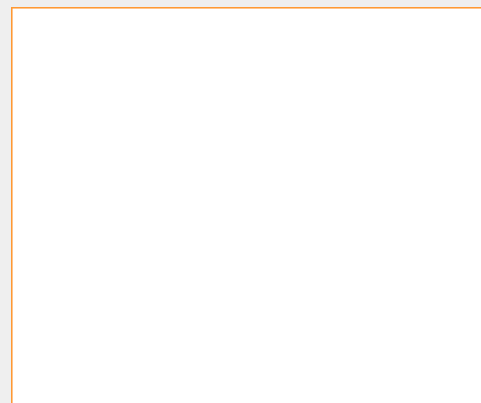
Why is no one concerend that women are not equally represented in blue collar jobs?

Is this "movement" toward "equality" really about fairness?

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Sempervirens in reply to Lyda TX

March 15th, 23:09

Men are over represented in the dangerous life threatening jobs that society depends on to function. women are over represented in the soft jobs such as real estate, administration, and public relations that produce no tangible value added.

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richerj

November 28th 2011, 22:23

If women are the cause of the gap in pay and employment, surely there must be a high-flying all-female law firm, architect firm, company that could demonstrate that the causes are external to women. Isn't there? it must exist. Doesn't it?

The survey doesn't deal with two of the largest issues at all: physical stamina which allows men ,generally, to produce more per time unit than women and the fact that more women want to "be employed" rather than "self-employed" except in all but the most traditional of "self-employed female " jobs.

The Economist is too politically correct to deal with those issues and its effect on incomes and advancement more than tangentially.

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qconover

November 28th 2011, 05:32

This isn't old times anymore a woman can do just as much as a man can do. The U.S. needs to take note from powerful China. China is as rich as it is because they don't simply see women as stay at home people anymore. You'll see a lot more woman out working over there that is why they have such high figures. If the U.S. wants more money made they should higher more women around. Drastic changes will be seen.

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adriancast

November 27th 2011, 01:22

It is almost embedded in society(at least here in the United States) that a man have a nice, high-paying job and the woman to stay at home and take care of the kids(her job is not a high-paid or top-notch position if she has a job). It is good to see these statistics to see that times are changing. It is also excellent to see the positive trend in the graph not only in the United States but other countries as well.

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aanandp

November 26th 2011, 16:54

In short, it all narrows down to education. Women, especially in most underdeveloped countries, still have a higher illiteracy rate. Obviously, it follows that they will have less access to achieving higher paying jobs. That being said, every day, women's rights to education is increasing in value. It is only a matter of time before the disparity between wages and occupation is minimized. It is still very surprising that India, with all its hype about soon becoming a world power, has a humongous gap. The only way they could possibly engage in activities on a global scale, is if they enforce more equality as soon as possible.

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JollyGoodFellow in reply to [aanandp](#)

November 26th 2011, 20:12

@wealthychef: How do you know that "It's not because women really want to be working"? Do you have data to back up that statement? I know a large number of women who find intellectual and personal satisfaction through paid work that they could never find by solely caring for their families, and I believe that number (and percentage) is growing.

@aanadp: Good point. That said, even women with equal education to men and in equal occupations are not generally rewarded with equal wages.

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jfchung

November 26th 2011, 16:19

The labor force participation rate graph definitely shows a wide spread of countries but I wish there was a way to show all of the countries. There was no note from the author suggesting that these were the highest countries with these values which was why they were selected.

The woman in business chart is really cool. It obviously shows the gender breakdown in different roles in larger a cooperation. What is interesting about it to me most specifically is what the meat of the article always wants to discuss which is why the number of women in higher position and higher paying jobs is still not as high as men. Even with "equality" of gender in equal opportunities for jobs and that concept has been around for a decent amount of time, I still think it is going to take several generations before cultures around the world definitely break of that norm and start implementing it.

Just because we decide today that women are equally as qualified for a position as males doesn't mean that it is going to happen over night obviously. It would take generations on top of generations to build these better women who qualify for the job, to get the appropriate mentorship and encouragement from more and more women seeking and actually seeing these opportunities become real life.

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Christina0216

November 26th 2011, 11:49

Some men just can't stand the fact that women are becoming more strong and independent. They'll come up with all sorts of "scientific theories" to prove that women's empowerment will destroy the world. According to some here, working women are responsible for the housing boom, for the European crisis (not the men who control the banks or the men in the Greek, Portuguese or Italian parliament), maybe they'll say that working women are responsible for global warming, too. It's funny how some people use economics or biology to disguise their vicious prejudice and chauvinism. It's amazing how discriminating language against women is broadly tolerated. I wonder if someone would talk about Africans, South Asians or Latin-Americans being "genetically" indisposed to be good managers because there aren't many of them in "Fortune 500".

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fanzhishu

November 26th 2011, 07:37

Now in China, females are working hard. For some reasons, females want to go to work to support their families or to live a better life without depending too much on their

husbands. And in china,people have a notion that females and males are equal in society,though sometimes females have more difficulties than males in finding good jobs.

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TEMPO.T

November 26th 2011, 07:09

I'm a Chinese .I guess this phenomenon probably caused by too many things like spinning mills in china, which need lots of women workers. What's more, many women have to work to improve their families' living standard .what's more; there is a slogan in China, 'women can hold up another half of the sky' .It also encourages Chinese women to be independent.

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shasan6

November 26th 2011, 06:59

This isn't old times anymore a woman can do just as much as a man can do. The U.S. needs to take note from powerful China. China is as rich as it is because they don't simply see women as stay at home people anymore. You'll see a lot more woman out working over there that is why they have such high figures. If the U.S. wants more money made they should higher more women around. Drastic changes will be seen.

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hmmmmmm

November 26th 2011, 05:45

Interestingly the Nordic countries having higher labor participation rate despite having both high taxes and good welfare. Something that conservatives say will make people set at home and eating bonbons all day.

And I'm not surprised at the Chinese numbers at all, the other things is that there actually many girls in engineering! Which is some I missed after going to school and working in the US. Why people here think girls aren't good at math is beyond me...

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anon_random

November 26th 2011, 04:35

I see the number of women in higher positions growing as we progress into the future, but only if the parents contribute a little more.

The numbers are skewed in some departments such as software engineers where the fields are dominated by males. Even with the efforts to bring in more females with scholarships, their isn't enough of a push to get them into these fields. As I began with, parents need to push their daughters into fields that are mostly men by getting them into geeky things such as computers / etc, and not so much about beauty.

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Diamondback6

November 26th 2011, 03:18

Clearly sexism is still an issue that needs to be fixed, especially in the work world. It would be very interesting to see a similar set of graphics using data concerning minorities in the work force.

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Megomyeggo

November 26th 2011, 02:15

While I think the results present in these statistics are some what credible, I think they are not fully representative of several "x-factors" that can dictate whether a woman can work or not. Now, for me as a young woman, I have always planned on working. However, there are many women that are represented in this statistic that simple do not wish to work-like "home moms" (when in reality, they really do have a job of taking care of children). Moreover, the bottom graph only represents the sum of working women in the business sector, which we must know is not the only field and may not even be the most attractive field for women to work in. I think much has been done to equalize men and women in the work field and most of the unbridled discrimination comes out in private work sectors that are not as closely monitored. Overall, even though the graphs above may be slightly misleading, I believe women have made great strides in the work force and will continue to do so, causing a rise in the above statistics.

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kt1234

November 26th 2011, 01:49

Growing up my mother not only worked, but maintained her high status in a huge company and always told me she has been the minority at her level. I was surprised to hear of this when I was younger, but now most everyone knows that women are still the minority in the workforce and face huge obstacles when it comes to being successful in the higher level of any corporation. The stigma from many years ago still exists: Women are not as capable of performing the more important jobs and therefore do not get them. This is a stigma that my mother, and now it seems, many other women are fighting and proving wrong. While 3% of women being CEO's seems discouraging, at least women are bagging some of the top notch jobs. It's great to see this movement and I hope that women keep proving themselves equal for many years to come.

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donjae

November 26th 2011, 01:36

There appears to be a trend between the conservatism and wage gap between males and females. As time progresses, things will change as the gap closes between the genders. India has the greatest gap out of the info graphic, but I highly doubt they have the biggest discrimination in pays. I am not surprised though that Finland and Sweden have very little wage differences. And I am happily surprised to see China is also very similar to the US. I believe that the population of a nation heavily affects the statistics, and perhaps larger countries struggle in creating something that is perfectly equal. As women become more prominent in higher education, and enter the workforce in jobs that are not typically filled with women, the gap will slowly close.

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kmalc15@vt.edu

November 26th 2011, 01:02

I would be very interested to see more studies as to why women are receiving less pay for the same work that men do. I think the difference in amount of jobs is because it is still somewhat expected/more frequent that the women stay at home. When you see that all of the United States presidents are still men, and we elected an African American president over a women president, it isn't as shocking to see

statistics like this. A little sexist, yes. But not shocking.

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kmalc15@vt.edu

November 26th 2011, 01:02

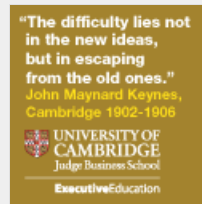
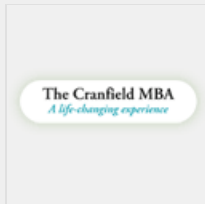
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