

Gender gap

30 years ago this month, the Equal Pay Act was introduced in the UK. Is the salary gap between men and women getting smaller? A number of recent reports make interesting reading.

1 Match a word in the first box to a word in the second box. Create as many collocations as you can.

managerial	family	low-paid	equal
part-time	unskilled	gender	full-time

gap	life
jobs	opportunities

2 Study the report extract and guess the missing figures. Check your answers by scanning paragraph one of the article.

Women in full-time work earn (a) ____ % less than men, while the part-time gender pay gap is (b) ____ %.
 Women make up only (c) ____ % of managers and senior officials.

From: Women and Work Commission

Women and work

Perhaps it is no surprise that discrimination against women in the UK continues to exist. The Women and Work Commission has found that, on average, women in full-time work earn 18% less than men, while the part-time gender pay gap is 40%. Many women still have low-paid jobs, often with limited hours, and with few chances for development or training. While some women are succeeding in balancing well-paid careers with family life, women are under-represented in managerial positions, making up only 32% of managers and senior officials.

The EOC (Equal Opportunities Commission) pointed out that the gender pay gap for part-time work has changed little since the introduction of the Equal Pay Act, 30 years ago this month. This gave an individual the right to the same contractual pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment. While discrepancies in salary are

frequently explained through a 'difference in ability', many women are angry that gender should be used to determine salary levels.

Earlier this year, the World Economic Forum reported that no country has completely closed the 'gender gap'. Sweden has the smallest difference between the sexes, followed by Norway, Iceland, Denmark and Finland. Women in Egypt are the furthest behind men in terms of economic equality. In France, comparable female executives were being paid on average 30% less than their male colleagues, according to a report just three years ago. While women are more likely to be promoted, they are also more likely to resign. Moreover, research indicates that more women than men were afraid to negotiate salaries. Clearly, the glass ceiling remains firmly in place, preventing women from achieving equality with their male colleagues.

3 Read the whole article. Were you surprised by any of the figures?

4 Find one word in each line that does not form a collocation with the noun at the end.

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|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| (1) (a) religious | (b) age | (c) sexual | (d) women | (e) racial | discrimination |
| (2) (a) to bridge | (b) to close | (c) to contract | (d) to reduce | (e) to narrow | (a / the) gap |
| (3) (a) to achieve | (b) to bring about | (c) to win | (d) to resign | (e) to enjoy | equality |

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups and report your ideas to the class.

- (a) Do you think that the 'gender gap' will ever be closed? Why / why not?
- (b) Does a 'gender gap' exist in your company?
- (c) Does your experience show that women are more likely to be promoted?
- (d) Do you agree with the research that women are less likely to negotiate salaries than men? Why?