

Equal pay

Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, is accused of sex discrimination against women, reviving arguments about equal pay.

1 Complete the sentences with the correct figures.

- (a) A woman in the US earns, on average, about of the average male salary 77% / 82% / 87%
- (b) 40 years ago in the US, a woman earned about of the average male salary 49% / 59% / 69%

2 Now scan paragraph two of the following article to check your answers.

Gender discrimination? Women are still earning less than men. However, the pay gap between the sexes is closing. In what is set to be the biggest civil rights case against a private employer in US legal history, it is alleged that Wal-Mart has systematically paid women less than men and passed them over for promotion. The case involves up to 1.6 million women who have worked for Wal-Mart since 1998. Wal-Mart lawyers argue that statistical differences in pay and positions were due to differing job interests between men and women that exist in the general workforce, and which therefore cannot be blamed on the company.

Female employees today earn an average of 77 percent of what their male co-workers do, up from 59 percent 40 years ago, according to the US census. While many women have made progress in professions such as law and medicine, discrimination continues across much of the economy.

Overall, just 15 percent of women work in jobs typically held by men, such as engineers, stockbrokers and judges. Fewer than 8 percent of men hold female-dominated jobs such as nurses or sales clerks. Male accountants in the US earn \$1,041 on average per week, while female accountants take home around \$756. Regarding the 'glass ceiling', according to a new study by Catalyst, a women's research organisation, 55 percent of women and 57 percent of men actually want to occupy the most senior role within an organisation.

The gap between men and women's pay in the UK is wider than official figures show, according to research by PayFinder.com, which compares salaries. It showed the average pay gap at 24 percent, wider than the official figure of 19 percent. The website states it is 'incredible' that the gender pay gap still exists in modern times.

3 Read the whole article and summarise the key points.

4 Identify one word in each line that does not collocate with the word 'discrimination'.

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|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) age | (b) gender | (c) class | (d) racial | (e) religion | (f) sexual | discrimination |
| (a) fast | (b) direct | (c) overt | (d) blatant | (e) indirect | (f) active | discrimination |
| (a) to stop | (b) to face | (c) to outlaw | (d) to refuse | (e) to ban | (f) to experience | discrimination |

5 Decide if you agree or disagree with the following statements. Circle your responses and compare your answers in small groups. (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). Justify your opinion.

(a) I think a woman should earn the same as a man	1	2	3	4	5
(b) There should be more men in female-dominated jobs	1	2	3	4	5
(c) All boards of directors should contain an equal number of men and women	1	2	3	4	5
(d) I feel happy with women's pay and promotion prospects in my own country	1	2	3	4	5
(e) I feel happy with women's pay and promotion prospects in my own company	1	2	3	4	5
(f) I think that women will never have the same employment rights as men	1	2	3	4	5