

# Big pay gap still remains between sexes

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The pay gap between the sexes grows substantially over the first ten years of a woman's career, new research has shown.

Dr. Leen Vandecasteele from The University of Manchester found that though educational opportunities nowadays give men and women an equal start, the effect is often lost when women's childcare responsibilities kick in.

The [sociologist](#) blames the disparity on years spent away from the [labour market](#) and working in occupations which employ mainly women - such as cleaning or nursing.

She presented her findings yesterday at the British Sociological Association conference on Work, Employment and Society in Brighton.

The researcher used survey data and developed graphs from more than 5,000 households to compare two cohorts in their early career, starting in 1991 and 2000 respectively.

She found that women in their early career earned on average 18% less than men in 1991, while this difference was down to 5% for the 2000 cohort.

Her analysis of the data, she said, showed the gender wage gap has largely disappeared for women at the start of their careers.

However, following the cohorts over their careers, she found that by the

eighth year of observation, the more recent cohort suffered a pay gap of 24%, almost catching up with the 27% figure for the earlier group.

The more recent cohort had higher education levels than the earlier cohort while their children were born substantially later. This, she says, could explain the more equal start in wages.

Dr Leen Vandecasteele is based at the University's Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research.

She said: "The research confirms that progress has already been made towards the equalization of the wages of men and [women](#) - at the very start of their career.

"But while the younger generation of British labour market entrants enjoy larger gender equality in educational opportunities and initial wages, this does not persist over their career."

She added: "Policy makers should realise that a focus on education alone will not eliminate the gender wage gap.

"It is more important to work on the negative wage consequences of years spent away from the labour market and the gender segregation of occupations."

**More information:** Data was used from *British Household Panel Survey*. The BHPS is a socio-economic household panel that started with a sample of more than 5000 households in 1991.

Provided by University of Manchester

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