

Study: New job trends reproducing old forms of gender inequality

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Jobs that come with large paychecks but long work hours are slowing the gains women have made since the late 70s in narrowing the gender wage gap.

A study by sociologists from Indiana University and Cornell University finds that the growing trend of overworking -- working 50 hours a week or more -- is partly responsible for the slowdown Americans have experienced since the mid-1990s in the convergence of the [gender gap](#) in pay. The gap between the percentage of [women](#) working full-time compared to [men](#) has shrunk during the past 30 years but the gender gap involving long working hours has changed little and remains large.

"Women, even when employed full time, typically have more [family obligations](#) than men," said IU [sociologist](#) Youngjoo Cha, who specializes in gender, labor markets and [social inequality](#). "This limits their availability for the 'greedy occupations,' that require long work hours, such as high-level managers, lawyers and doctors. In these occupations, workers are often evaluated based on their face time."

Cha will discuss her findings on Sunday during the American Sociological Association's annual meeting in Las Vegas.

The study, using data collected by the U.S. [Census Bureau](#), finds the relative hourly wage of overworkers compared to full-time workers has increased substantially over the past three decades. Because a greater percentage of male workers are overworking, this change benefited men

more than women.

"Gender gaps in overwork, when coupled with rising returns to overwork, exacerbate the gender gap in [wages](#)," Cha said. "New ways of organizing work are reproducing old forms of inequality."

More about the study:

- In 1979, 15 percent of men and 3 percent of women worked 50 hours or more per week. These percentages peaked in the late 1990s at 19 percent of men and 7 percent of women. The percentage for men decreased slightly during the 2000s, possibly due to the effects of the recession on occupations overrepresented by men, and has remained stagnant for women.
- The real wages of men who worked 50 hours or more per week increased 54 percent between 1979 and 2009. The wages of women who worked the same hours increased, too, by 94 percent. The wages of standard full-time workers (35 or more hours, but less than 50 hours) increased 13 percent for men and 46 percent for women between the same years.
- The rising price of overwork slowed the decrease in the gender wage gap by 9.2 percent between 1979 and 2007. The effect is large enough to offset the gains achieved by narrowing the education gap.
- The increase in overwork was most prominent in professional and managerial occupations, as was the increase in wages paid to overworkers. In these occupations, the rising price of overwork had the greatest impact on the gender gap in wages -- in managerial occupations, for example, the gender gap in wages would be 34 percent smaller if prices for overwork had remained constant.
- Overwork compensation can be compared to standard full-time

wages by breaking them down into an hourly wage. In 1979, men who overworked earned 14 percent less than men who worked fulltime once their pay was spread over the longer hours, and women saw a 19 percent penalty. Pay for overwork has increased so rapidly over the years that now men and women both earn a six percent premium in this hourly wage comparison.

Most of the decline in the gender gap in wages occurred in the 1980s. Women now earn an estimated 81 percent of what men earn.

Cha will discuss her findings on Sunday, Aug. 21, during a session on Organizations, Occupations and Work at the Annual Meeting of the [American Sociological Association](#). The co-author of the study is Kim Weeden, Cornell University.

Provided by Indiana University

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