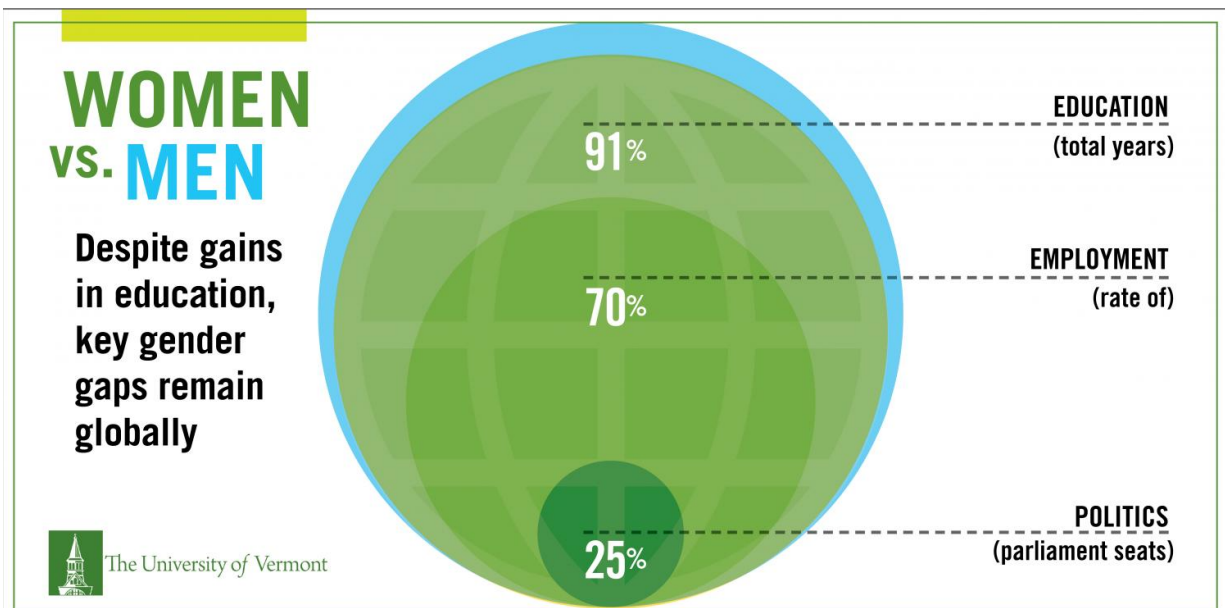


# Why education doesn't bring women equal pay

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A graphic showing that despite gains in education, key gender gaps remain. Credit: University of Vermont

Women are closing the education gap with men, but a global study of gender equality shows these advances are failing to bring equal access to quality jobs and government representation.

The study, which explored decades of data from more than 150 countries, finds that women have reached 91 percent of the education

that men have - but only 70 percent of their rate of employment, and just 25 percent of political representation.

The findings challenge the assumption that education—a hallmark of international development efforts—translates into equal access to high-paying jobs, and suggest greater policy interventions are required to close political and workplace [gender](#) gaps.

According to study author Stephanie Seguino, a University of Vermont economist, the belief that markets will fix these gaps fails to account for centuries-old gender norms and male hierarchies that education alone can't change.

"Clearly, education alone is not enough to solve this problem," says Prof. Seguino, whose study is published in *Journal of African Development*. "We need concrete policy tools to break down gender barriers, because the market's 'invisible hand' is not working."

The study offers two key reasons for women's lower employment and income: greater exclusion from high-paying jobs, and a disproportionate amount of unpaid household work, including care for children and aging parents.

Seguino says policy changes are needed to level the playing field, including paid parental leave, affordable daycare - and potentially even gender quotas.

## **Gender gap worst in work and politics**

For the study, Seguino analyzed global data from the World Bank, the International Labor Organization and other key sources from 1990-2010.

The greatest progress towards gender equality has been made in

education and life expectancy. Globally, women's total years of education is now 91 percent of men's. In more than half the world's countries, female education rates are now similar—or greater—than men, up from 33 percent in 1990.

Despite these gains, women's employment rates are 30 percent lower than men's - even less in some regions of Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. The study also finds that women face rising job segregation. The share of women employed in the relatively high-paying industrial sector compared to men, has dropped 20 percentage points since 1990.

"Equal employment is crucial," says Seguíno, a researcher in UVM's Gund Institute for Ecological Economics and College of Arts and Science. "Without equal access to quality work, women are vulnerable and disempowered. Moreover, their lower job status perpetuates the stereotype of men as the breadwinners of society."

The gender gap remains widest in political representation, Seguíno finds. While political representation for women has increased compared to men—from 14 percent in 1990, measured in government seats—they still remain woefully under represented at 25 percent, the study finds. Legislative bodies in some nations, including Haiti and Qatar, still have no female members.

"Without women, governments are more likely to spend taxpayer money in ways that disproportionately benefit men—or at least ignore the extra burdens on women," Seguíno adds. "We need women in government to ensure their life conditions and needs are reflected in these policy and funding decisions."

## **Glass ceiling requires policy tools**

Changes in public spending are needed to level the playing field, says Seguino. Potential policy solutions include affordable childcare, paid parental leave, diverse hiring practices, public transportation access, rural health clinics, and even gender quotas.

She cites Canada's recent gender quota, which increased female government representation to 50 percent overnight, as example for how policy can improve gender equality.

Countries such as Rwanda have also adopted political gender quotas, and Norway requires equitable representation of women on corporate boards.

## **Less than 77 cents on the dollar**

The findings shed new light on the well-known statistic—reported previously elsewhere—that women in the U.S. earn 77 percent of what men are paid.

"Women actually likely earn much less than 77 percent of what men make," Seguino says. "Right off the bat, men have more of the high paying jobs, so women are squeezed into lower-paid positions. And female unemployment continues to be about 30 percent higher than men's, worldwide, so those women are not able to earn their own livelihood."

## **Potential gender conflicts**

In some nations, manufacturing declines led to male job losses, while women's employment increased as the service sector expanded. According to Seguino, this can lead to gender conflicts, as men perceive their ability to fulfill their breadwinner role is weakened by women's rising employment.

"For men to take a lower paying job is a real challenge to their gender identity, and that can create a gender conflict that we rarely discuss," she says.

This is crucial for policymakers to address, Seguíno adds. "We won't have the political support for the investments and policy changes needed to improve women access to work, if it's assumed that policy makers are promoting women's wellbeing by making men worse off."

## **Methods**

For the study, "Global Trends in Gender Equality," Seguíno measured gender inequality in three key categories: capability (education and health data), livelihoods (employment, job segregation, and other economic indicators), and agency, as measured by parliamentary seats and other forms of political representation.

### **Key findings—Education:**

- Total education years: Women have 91% of men's (up from 82% in 1990)
- Secondary school enrolment: Nearly equal
- Share of nations with female/male education ratios at or above 95% (52%, up from 33% in 1990)
- Educational gains are greatest in the countries with lowest female/male ratios in 1990.

### **Livelihoods:**

- Female employment rate is 70% that of men's (up from 62% in 1990)
- Gender job segregation has worsened since 1990

- Industrial sector: Female/male ratio of employment in the high-paying, benefit-rich jobs has dropped 20 percentage points.

## Political Representation:

- Overall, [women](#) share of parliamentary seats is 25 percent compared to men's
- Women's share of parliamentary seats compared to [men's](#) increased 14 percentage points from 1990 to 2010.

Provided by University of Vermont

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