

Women and men in STEM often at odds over workplace equity

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Half of women working in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) jobs report having experienced gender discrimination at work, according to a new Pew Research Center survey examining people's experiences in the workplace and perceptions of fair treatment for women - as well as racial and ethnic minorities - in STEM occupations. The share of women in STEM reporting gender discrimination at work is higher among those who work in majority-male workplaces (78%), those who work in computer jobs (74%) and those with postgraduate degrees (62%).

When compared with [women](#) working in non-STEM fields, women in STEM are more likely to say they have experienced gender-related discrimination in the workplace (50% vs. 41%). In other respects, however, women in STEM jobs report facing challenges that echo those many working women in non-STEM positions face. For instance, both are equally likely to say they have experienced [sexual harassment](#) at work (22%) and both groups are less inclined than their male counterparts to think that women are "usually treated fairly" when it comes to opportunities for promotion and advancement.

The nationally representative survey of 4,914 U.S. adults included 2,344 workers in STEM jobs to speak to the issues facing women and minorities in the STEM workforce. It was conducted from July 11 to Aug. 10, 2017, prior to the many recent allegations of sexual harassment by men in positions of public prominence. An accompanying Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data finds that the

number of jobs in STEM has grown substantially - particularly in computer occupations. Although there have been significant gains in women's representation in life and physical sciences since 1990, the share of women working in computer occupations has gone down 7 percentage points. Representation in STEM jobs has consequences for workers' wallets as STEM workers earn significantly more, on average, than non-STEM workers with similar education.

"At a time when the STEM community has been renewing its commitment to diversity, this study reveals that men and women in STEM continue to experience the workplace quite differently," said Cary Funk, director of science research at Pew Research Center and lead author of the report. "Half of women working in STEM say they have encountered some form of gender discrimination at work. Women employed in STEM settings where men outnumber women are among those most likely to say they see workplace inequities."

Among the major findings are:

Women in STEM jobs are more likely than their male colleagues to report experiences with discrimination and to consider sexual harassment a problem at work.

- Half (50%) of women in STEM jobs have experienced at least one of eight types of gender discrimination at work, with only 19% of men in STEM jobs saying the same. Women in STEM jobs report an array of experiences with discrimination including being treated as if they were not competent (29%); earning less than their male counterparts for the same job (29%); experiencing repeated, small slights at work (20%); and receiving less support from senior leaders than a man doing the same job (18%).
- More than one-third of women in STEM positions (36%)

consider sexual harassment in their workplace to be at least a small problem, with 28% of men saying the same. Some 22% of women in STEM say they have experienced sexual harassment at work; the same share of women who work in non-STEM positions say this (22%).

- One-in-five women in STEM (20%) say their gender has made it harder to succeed at work, compared with 7% of men in STEM. Among women in STEM jobs who work in majority-male settings that figure rises to 48%.

Blacks stand out from other STEM workers for the high share who report having experienced race-related discrimination at work.

- Blacks in STEM jobs are more likely than others in STEM positions to say they have experienced discrimination at work due to their race or ethnicity. Overall, 62% of blacks, followed by 44% of Asians, 42% of Hispanics and just 13% of whites in STEM jobs say they have experienced any of eight forms of discrimination at work due to their race or ethnicity.
- Some 37% of blacks in STEM jobs believe that blacks, as a group, are usually treated fairly where they work when it comes to opportunities for advancement and promotion, 36% say blacks are sometimes treated fairly and sometimes treated unfairly, and 24% believe that blacks are usually treated unfairly where they [work](#) in this regard. By contrast, most white STEM workers (75%) believe that blacks are usually treated fairly when it comes to opportunities for advancement and promotion.

Women's representation in the STEM workforce varies widely across job types; it has gone up in life and physical sciences since 1990 but has gone down by 7 percentage points in computer jobs.

- Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data shows

that women account for the majority of healthcare practitioners and technicians (75%) but are underrepresented in other types of STEM jobs, especially computers and engineering. The share of women in STEM overall is driven in large part by women's overrepresentation in health-related jobs, the largest STEM job type.

- Computer occupations - a job type that includes computer science, systems analysis, software development, information systems management and programming - has grown 338% since 1990. Women's representation in these jobs has decreased, however, from 32% in 1990 to 25% today.
- Gains in women's representation in STEM jobs since 1990 have been concentrated among women holding advanced degrees, although women still tend to be underrepresented among such workers. Women are 41% of all STEM workers with a professional or doctoral degree such as an M.D., D.D.S. or Ph.D.
- Black and Hispanic workers continue to be underrepresented in the STEM workforce. Blacks make up 9% of STEM workers, compared with 11% of the U.S. workforce overall. Hispanics comprise 16% of the U.S. workforce but only 7% of STEM workers. Compared with their shares in the overall workforce, whites and Asians are overrepresented in STEM.

Most Americans rate K-12 STEM education as average or worse compared with other developed nations, so do those with an advanced degree in STEM.

- Americans give relatively low marks to public K-12 education in STEM subjects compared with other developed nations; 43% rate it as average, 30% as below average, and 25% either as above average or the best in the world.
- Americans' views of higher education in STEM are more favorable by comparison, but there, too, fewer than half consider

undergraduate education (35%) or graduate education (38%) in STEM fields as at least above average compared with other developed nations.

- 62% of those who, themselves, have a postgraduate degree in a STEM field consider U.S. graduate education in STEM to be either the best in the world or above average compared with other developed nations. But just 13% of this group says K-12 STEM education is at least above average.
- Nonetheless, 75% of Americans look back on their K-12 science classes as something they generally liked. Science labs and hands-on learning experiences stand out as a key appeal among those who liked science classes. Among those who say they disliked science classes in K-12, 46% say one reason is that such classes were hard, while 36% say they found it hard to see how such classes would be useful to them in the future.

This analysis relies on a broad-based definition of the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) workforce. STEM jobs include: computer and mathematical [jobs](#), architecture and engineering, life sciences, physical sciences, and healthcare practitioners and technicians. Analysis of STEM workers in the Pew Research Center survey also includes teachers at the K-12 or postsecondary level with a specialty in teaching STEM subjects.

You can read the report at:

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/01/09/women-and-men-in-stem-often-at-odds-over-workplace-equity/>

Provided by Pew Research Center

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