How have gender stereotypes changed in the last 30 years?

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Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Difference, and *r* Values in 1983 and 2014 Data Sets.

	1983					2014						
	Man	Person	Woman	M–W	1983 *R*	Man	Person	Woman	M–W	2014 *R*	*R* Change 1983–2014	*p* Value (two-tailed)
Agentic traits	75.3 (14.3)	64.5 (13.5)	61.3 (16.3)	14.0	+.42	67.7 (11.4)	51.8 (11.7)	60.2 (14.7)	7.5	+.27	−.15	.23
Communal traits	62.3 (15.1)	64.4 (14.5)	76.7 (15.2)	−14.4	−.43	51.6 (16.5)	53.7 (14.4)	72.6 (13.0)	−20.9	−.57	+.14	.19
Male gender roles	76.8 (16.9)	69.5 (17.8)	53.7 (19.8)	23.1	+.53	69.3 (11.4)	54.2 (11.0)	51.9 (14.4)	14.8	+.56	+.03	.75
Female gender roles	51.6 (21.5)	71.4 (18.1)	77.22 (16.0)	−25.6	−.56	47.4 (14.4)	57.5 (11.7)	75.1 (9.7)	−27.7	−.75	+.19*	.01**
Male-typed occupations	69.7 (25.1)	31.3 (23.2)	34.2 (20.2)	35.5	+.61	59.6 (26.4)	23.6 (20.7)	27.2 (18.2)	32.5	+.58	−.03	.45
Female-typed occupations	35.3 (22.3)	30.0 (24.0)	69.8 (24.0)	−34.4	−.60	28.0 (15.7)	22.8 (20.2)	57.9 (27.7)	−30.0	−.55	−0.05	.58
Male physical characteristics	65.0 (15.4)	51.2 (14.0)	44.9 (16.7)	20.0	+.53	60.7 (13.5)	42.4 (11.5)	39.5 (12.7)	21.2	+.63	+.10	.15
Female physical characteristics	47.4 (16.8)	51.4 (13.4)	65.6 (16.1)	−18.3	−.48	37.5 (12.1)	39.9 (10.6)	56.0 (12.7)	−18.5	−.60	+.12	.25

Note. The *p* values that represent the *r* to *z* transformation (Preacher, 2002) are two-tailed. *N*s for 1983 M-W comparisons are 105 for gender roles, occupations, and physical characteristics and 85 for agentic and communal traits. *N*s for 2014 M-W comparisons are 121. M-W = man–woman.
*$p < .05$, two tailed. **$p < .01$, two tailed.

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A new study finds that gender stereotypes are as strong today as they were 30 years ago, and that people are even more likely now to believe that men avoid "traditional" female roles. This research is out today in *Psychology of Women Quarterly* (*PWQ*).

"Changes in the activities and representation of women and men in society have unquestionably occurred since the early 1980s; however, those changes apparently have not been sufficient to alter strongly held and seemingly functional beliefs about the basic social category of gender," commented researchers Elizabeth L. Haines, Kay Deaux and Nicole Lofaro.

The study authors compared data from 195 college students in 1983 to data from 191 adults in 2014.The study participants from each time period rated the likelihood that a typical man or woman has a set of gendered characteristics. The researchers found that despite greater diversity in the 2014 sample, people continue to strongly stereotype men and women on personality traits (e.g. kindness, competitiveness), gender role behaviors (e.g. tending the house, upholding moral and religious values), occupations (e.g. registered nurse, engineer) and physical characteristics (e.g., delicate, deep voice). They also found that:

- In the 2014 sample, men and women were largely similar in their gender stereotyping; they showed similar stereotyping on psychological traits and occupations for both genders and on physical characteristics for males.
- Women and men were believed to be more equally engaged in financial roles in 2014 than in 1982. For example, in 2014, both genders were equally believed to assume financial obligations, make major decisions, and handle financial matters.
- Beliefs about male gender roles, such as that males "repair and maintain the car," did not significantly change from 1983 to 2014.The increase in female gender role stereotyping appears to be the result of men being perceived as less likely than women to engage in female gender roles (e.g., tends the house, takes care of children) in 2014.
- The 2014 data also showed that men were more likely to believe gender stereotypes about male gender role behaviors, while women were more likely to believe stereotypes about female gender role behaviors.

"Previous research has shown that many gender differences are small or inconsistent yet the current study finds that people exaggerate the extent to which men and women are different from one another," continued the researchers. "People may perceive strong differences between men and women for two reasons. First, unconscious bias may distort the way in which people perceive and thus remember gender atypical behavior as more stereotypical that it actually was. Second, the genders may curtail cross gender behavior for fear that they may incur backlash that is typically directed at atypical men and women (e.g., wimpy men or powerful women)."

The researchers recommend that those in advising or therapeutic roles be aware of how gender stereotypes can affect the goals of their advisees and clients, even among those who express egalitarian beliefs. For those who hire employees and give performance evaluations, the researchers recommend increased awareness of gender stereotypes and the elimination of gendered criteria on job descriptions. In addition, the researchers recommend that leaders of organizations consider the potential gender cues they emit, which may enable stereotypes to persist, discourage men and women from entering a particular field, and affect employee performance

Applying these findings to politics and the 2016 presidential campaign in particular, the researchers also recommended that voters be vigilant about the influence of gender stereotypes on their decisions.

More information: "The Times They Are A-Changing...Or Are They Not? A Comparison of Gender Stereotypes, 1983 to 2014" *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 2016.

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