

Sex segregation of the labour market

[Finance](#), [Market](#)



Legislations and provisions that can reduce sex segregation are essential in the path to equal opportunity (Straw, 1989). Although the purpose of certain federal regulations is to give women equal opportunities, government actions have often increased sex segregation. These protective laws were meant to protect women from exploitative working conditions. However, when put to practice, they often reduced the number of jobs women had access to.

For instance in the middle of the nineteenth century, laws that forbade women to work more than certain number of hours while men could work more, caused employers to hire men over women (Reskin and Padavic, 1994). The Equal Pay Act of 1970 (for the U. K.) made it illegal for employers to pay women less than men in the same jobs. This provides assistance for women who face paydiscrimination, they can then lead lawsuits which will in turn teach employers that sex discrimination costs them (Meulders et al. , 1993). Organizations can also provide their own provisions to help women cope with the disadvantages society associate with them.

There are many possibilities companies can give to women who have a difficult time accommodating to changingfamilypatterns. In order to meet responsibilities associated with their children, parents can benefit from flexible working arrangements such as working from home. Because of the recent progress made intechology, soon the need for a central workplace should decrease dramatically, allowing parents to work in the office while their child is at school and then from home when they've returned from school (Arnold et al, 1991).

Another possibility is a nursery located very close or even in the workplace, this could augment the number of women returning after maternity leave and allow parents to see their children during the day (Konek and Kitch, 1994). Despite the numerous actions that have taken place against sexual discrimination, women still face many difficulties obtaining the same status as men in the workplace. The discrimination faced by women will influence their capability to achieve and work to their maximum ability.

Some of their additional problems include conflicts with the roles women have to play in an organization. Women can be labelled as tokens if they are less than 15% of a total category in an organization. Women are then viewed as symbols of their group instead of individuals. Consequently, this role is associated with disadvantages such as increased performance pressure, visibility, being a test case for future women, isolation and lack of female role models, exclusion from male groups and distortion of women's behaviour in order to fit them into stereotypes (Davidson and Cooper, 1992).

" In theory, they have embraced the need for equal opportunities and family friendly policies but, in practice, their attitudes remain entrenched in the old ways" (Reeves, p. 46, 2002) In order to succeed, women have to be as much like men as possible. Rather than women making work more feminine, work seems to have made women more masculine (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). The gendered division of labour today is the result of a long historical process, with men and women sometimes in reversed roles.

Although, society is now trying to eliminate sex segregation, the general cultural conceptions and expectations of a time when the roles of women

and men were more fixed still remains (Alvesson and Billing, 1997). Even though women are optimistically trying to shatter the glass ceiling, much needs to be done to reach equality in the workplace. Measures need to be taken to enforce new social morals, values and attitudes and therefore transform existing stereotypes.

Legislations and provisions must be reinforced, and the overall atmosphere in society needs to adapt to women's inevitably strong labour force. Even if in the past decades there has been a decrease of sex discrimination in the western society, " women account for only three per cent of executive directors in the FTSE 350" (Ashworth, p. 2, 2003). In order to survive as a competitive economy and as a society, the UK workforce needs to seize the problems of sex discrimination in the labour market (Arnold et al. , 1991).