

# Effect of parenthood on gender pay gaps



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Gender roles in society: Forming the gender wage gap today are the same stereotypical gender attitudes of the past.

### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to look at the effect that becoming a parent has on the gender pay gap. Societies views on parenthood effect men and women differently. Women seem to be penalized in the workplace, while men are rewarded financially by parenthood. The more children that she has, the greater that “ motherhood penalty” amount becomes. This penalty/reward effect on income, seems to stem from society’s stereotypical attitudes. There is definite division of labor between the men and women regarding non-paying duties and responsibilities. Women see their workload increase significantly over that of their male partners. This paper examines factors that influence pay for women once they become parents and how a change in societies perceived gender division of labor is a necessity for closing the gender pay gap as well as the gender equality gap.

Gender Roles in Society: Forming the Gender Wage Gap Today Are the Same Stereotypical Gender Attitudes of the Past.

Societies views on parenthood effect men and women differently. Women seem to be penalized in the workplace while men are rewarded financially by parenthood. The division of labor in the home associated with parenthood increases the number of nonpaying hours that women and men work, but the women end up shouldering the bulk of that workload. Parenthood seems to be a major factor in the ongoing gender pay gap for women. This paper examines factors that influence the gender pay gap in the labor force, how

the pay gap increases by becoming a mother, the division of labor in two family homes when transitioning to parenthood, and the necessity for a change in the stereotypical attitude that society has of how the duties of parenthood should be divided by gender.

The number of women in the workforce has changed drastically over the last six decades. At one time in our country's historic past, women were only permitted to enter the labor force under desperate conditions. Times of war provided one of the stepping stones allowing women to work in public. When the number of men available to work was lowered due to military enrollment, women stepped up and kept America's factories running. More and more women enjoyed their time in the workforce and decided that even after the men returned, they wanted to continue working. This began the challenge of societies stereotypical attitudes among gender roles and the pursuit of gender equality.

Gender equality can be defined as the absence of discrimination in relation to opportunities, allocation of resources or benefits and access to services for women and men (Elwer et al., 2012). One goal of gender equality has always been equal work for equal pay. After 55 years, the gender pay gap is still the most studied topic in labor economics. In 1950 the percentage of women in labor force was around 33% and sixty years later that number had grown to about 47% of the labor force. During those sixty years the gender gap has significantly narrowed. (Toossi & Morisi, 2017). Over the last decade, the shrinkage of the gender pay gap as stalled out. The National Center for Education Statistics point out that women make up more than 56% of college students. Since 2014 more women have graduated from

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college with degrees than men. Women's average pay rate in 1963, at the time of the Equal Pay Act, was 59 cents earned for every dollar a male co-worker made. Despite all the gains in education and equal pay laws, the gender gap today causes women to earn an average of 80 cents for every dollar that a man with the same education would make. As for the closing rate in the pay gap, it is only narrowing in at about a half a penny per year. At this rate the traditional college graduates of today, will be nearing retirement age before true pay equality is reached (Glauber, 2018).

### How Parenthood Effects the Gender Pay Gap

While starting a family requires both male and female participation in some form or another, the financial repercussions of parenthood vary wildly between men and women. Women can expect to be affected even more by the gender pay gap once they become mothers. Studies have shown that when a woman becomes a mother, she will be affected by something labeled as the motherhood wage penalty. This motherhood penalty is a major contributor to the gender pay gap.

Our society still tends to lead towards a more stereotypical gender-based division of household labor. It is perceived that women are nurturers by the design of nature, so when parenthood is added to the equation women are expected to carry most of the added responsibilities. Many women take time off from work for physical childbearing and some take extended leaves for child rearing. The choices that women must make regarding taking an extended leave of absence from work is usually affected by outside influences. The lack of control over work hours, high costs of child care,

access to paid maternity leave, and lack of support or discrimination towards working mothers, and the earnings differences within the couple can affect decisions about extended job leave. Absences from work for Obstetrician doctor appointments related to pre-birth until child birth, maternity leave for recovery from child birth, and other absences to care for sick children or elderly family members add up. The missing salary from such absences lower a woman's lifetime earning potentials. Being away from the workplace for extended periods of time can slow or stop women from getting pay raises and she could be passed over for a higher-level job promotion because she is perceived to be less committed to her job than a woman without a child or a man (Hegewisch et al., 2017).

Men on the other hand reap a reward from parenthood called the fatherhood wage premium. Several studies have shown that fathers receive different wage premiums according to their wage-earning level. Hodges and Budig found that the fatherhood premium was larger for married men, white men, college graduates, those in professional or managerial occupations, and those in households with a more traditional gender division of labor. By the early 2010s, these men earned a 12 % premium for three or more children. “ White college graduates receive a 21 percent bonus for fatherhood, whereas white men without college degrees accrue a fatherhood bonus of 8 to 9 percent” (Hodges & Budig, 2010).

The Perception that Mothers are Working Fewer Hours and Causing the Pay Gap

Many people continue to blame the gender pay gap on the mothers themselves. Explaining that mothers chose to work less paid hours in order to put their families first, and this was the primary reason that pay differences occur. To study this accusation, research about these issues were gathered in the United States and Germany. Participants were chosen because they met the requirements needed to form a reliable comparison in data. Individuals were selected from colleges in the United States and Germany. They were sent out an email that stated the nature of the survey, who was conducting the survey, and who was eligible to fill out the survey (Sieverding et al., 2018).

The colleges used to provide the participants that were sampled for the study were selected by using the Shanghai ranking list (<http://www.arwu.org/>), which compares top ranking universities in the world. In Germany, two high ranking colleges, one from the former Eastern Germany and one from the former Western Germany areas were selected. The United States participant samples were chosen by using the same ranking system. One Ivy League university and two state universities were chosen to represent the United States in the survey (Sieverding et al., 2018).

The software “ Soscisurvey” ([www.socisurvey.de](http://www.socisurvey.de)), was used to conduct the online survey. This software program is very high tech and allowed for individual serial numbers to assigned to the survey. Insuring that participants could only fill out the form one time. It didn’t assign the name of the participant to the survey, which allows for complete anonymity. A balanced number of women and men were chosen to participate and no

incentives, other than the results of the survey upon the completion of the study, were promised to the focus groups (Sieverding et al., 2018).

Consistent with other research, this study found that U. S. early career researchers work more hours than German researchers. Results showed that female German early career researchers (on average) worked less than male German researchers. Additionally, results supported the “mothers work less” hypothesis in Germany, such that female researchers (on average) worked substantially less when they had children. This supports the notion that “babies do matter” [39] for female researchers in Germany. As work hours are an important indicator of vocational engagement and a predictor of vocational success [11], the differences in work hours may have important consequences for the future of women in academia. The present study did not find evidence for a similar effect for the U. S. sample [25]. Specifically, in the US, male and female researchers (on average) worked equal amount of hours, and this effect held when researchers had children. (Sieverding et al., 2018, p. 11)

While investigating the early careers of Americans and Germans in higher positions in academia show that the amount of work hours is not an explanation of the gender pay gap that occurs in the United States. The idea that female professionals that are mothers will work less hours than females without children and/or their male coworkers, was not supported by this research (Sieverding et al., 2018).

Division of Labor During the Transition to Parenthood Produces Inequality

Along with parenthood comes changes and extra responsibilities. Changes in household duties stand out as the most noticeable. Men tend to spend more time and energy on paid work, and women devote more time and energy to their families. Many studies exist on how the division of this extra unpaid labor is handled in two parent households. According to Yavorsky there was not a difference found between women who had children and women without children when it came to work effort, work intensity, motivation to work, or other work-related behaviors. The results suggest that the gender division of work load inside the family, including paid and unpaid work, increased for both women and men. The work load was more evenly distributed in the primarily highly educated dual-earner couples that were studied. “ Women in these families experienced a large increase of 3 hours a day in their total work (not including child engagement) across the transition to parenthood, whereas men increased their total work by about 40 minutes a day” (Yavorsky et al., 2015, p. 673). This means that, over the course of a year, parenthood increased women’s total workload by about 4½ weeks of 24-hour days, whereas parenthood increased men’s total workload by approximately 1½ weeks—a 3-week gender difference. The labor division was even more unbalanced towards the mothers in other educational and income levels that were studied (Yavorsky et al., 2015).

#### A Change in Gender Roles Attitudes Can Close the Gender Pay Gap

When society accepts that men and women must both share equally in unpaid work duties and responsibilities to care for their family, then employers can be forced to allow men and women the required flexibility in benefits that will allow them to divide that work load equally. By erasing the <https://assignbuster.com/effect-of-parenthood-on-gender-pay-gaps/>



mentality that the primary provider of income, a caregiver to elderly family members, a homemaker, or the parent that should always take care of child related activities are gender specific duties, we can finally close the gender pay gap and a true equality between the genders can exist.

In conclusion the research shows that women face a penalty for parenthood, while fathers are rewarded with extra income. In the last sixty-five years the United States has continued to make laws to establish equal treatment of the gender, but still the gender wage gap unarguable exists. Over the past 70 years the gender pay gap has significantly lowered and workplace equality has been improving for women. The number of women in the workforce has grown exponentially and the pay gap has decreased over the last several decades. Even though the pay gap has decreased, the fact is that a gap remains. Research points to several factors that are still responsible for the ongoing gender pay gap and most of those factors are tied to stereotypical gender role attitudes. Something as joyful as starting a family will have financial and career burdens on women, that men will not be forced to experience. The motherhood penalty as it is called, still exists today. Women who become mothers can expect to see a loss in their pay, and the more children that she has, the greater that amount becomes. Research suggests that fathers receive the opposite affect when becoming a parent, an increase in pay known as the fatherhood wage premium. This penalty/premium effect on incomes, seems to stem from society's gender roles of men and women. When a couple becomes parents, there is definite division of labor between the men and women regarding childcare and housework. Women see their workload increase dramatically over that of their male partners. These

results show that parenthood is still a stumbling block on the path to complete gender equality. With most of the childcare and unpaid labor still being shouldered by the women, we will continue to have a gender pay gap. Absences from work for Obstetrician doctor appointments related to pre-birth until child birth, maternity leave for recovery from child birth, and other absences to care for sick children or elderly family members continue to leave women feeling the effects of motherhood in their paycheck. The motherhood penalty will continue to affect everyone in society, until we can change our mentality towards dividing family responsibilities according to gender. A change in the attitude of society to accept that both parents must equally share in the division of labor when starting a family, will be the only way to create true gender equality. When it becomes socially acceptable for men and women to be equally responsible as the primary care givers to children and family members, we will completely close the gender pay gap. Allowing men and women the proper resources needed from their jobs, without the fear of job loss or pay loss, to equally divide the chores of parenthood will be the only way to eliminate the gender pay gap. When true gender equality is obtained everyone will benefit.

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