

Gender inequality in the workplace

[Sociology](#), [Human Rights](#)



The point in which women lost their equality with men can be traced back to centuries before Greece or the Roman Empire. Many historians agree that women lost any chance of having an upper hand, or even being equal to men when typical hunter-gathering societies ended and private property and farming developed. This is because men became owners of private property, when they domesticated animals and took over agricultural production, thus economically disempowering women and making them dependent upon men. If women did not obey their husbands they would be out casted and not have a home. Patriarchy has long continued throughout the world even up until the present day. While patriarchy and women's subordination to men have been diminishing in most societies, there are still many inequalities between women and men. This is especially true within the workforce and the very different jobs of men and women.

Men and women today still do not have the same opportunities, or receive the same wages for the same work. In fact, a recent study found that in 2015 the gender wage gap was seventy-eight cents. This means that for every full dollar a man makes, a women is only making seventy-eight cents. In some areas the wage gap is even larger, leaving women at even more of a disadvantage. This gap proves that there are many inequalities that still need to be fixed among men and women. There is also much discrimination that occurs in the work place, specifically among jobs where women have entered male-dominated fields. This is especially true within the field of law enforcement. Law enforcement has typically been a male-dominated field. When women began entering the field of law enforcement, they faced strong discrimination from not only their coworkers but also society. Discrimination

of women with law enforcement careers has a long history and continues today. Women deserve equality in society and within all career fields, but especially within a law enforcement career where they constantly risk their lives on a daily basis to protect the very citizens in society that discriminate against them. This issue demonstrates that women and men are far from treated equally and still have a long time to go in order for true equality to be achieved.

Women have been involved in the criminal justice system since 1905. They often worked as prison guards, or “matrons.” In that same year, Lola Baldwin of Portland, Oregon became the very first woman to achieve full arrest authority; this made her the first police woman within the United States. This led to changing tides within the law enforcement field. By being granted full arrest powers, Lola Baldwin was on the same level as other men who were police officers. Lola Baldwin served in Portland, Oregon, but opened up the field of law enforcement for women all over the country. Baldwin showed that she was as good of a police officer as any man that she was serving with in Portland. She arrested criminals and delinquents without a struggle. The only struggle Baldwin faced was from her coworkers who did not believe a woman was fit for a police officer position. Men were still under the assumption that women belonged in the home and if they did work, they were not suited for a man’s job.

Lola Baldwin faced countless amounts of discrimination and had to fight extremely hard in order to finally achieve the status of police women.

Baldwin was an active moral reformer as well as a very public figure who

constantly had to prove herself worthy of the position. Baldwin became popular by arguing about cleaning up the city of Portland and suggesting that a woman was a necessary part of ridding the city of criminals and crime. This relates to the Republican Motherhood and how women were only supposed to get involved in the public sphere if they were doing some sort of "civic housekeeping." Her arguments caught the public's attention and she was able to move from moral reformer into the position of police officer, however, she fought very hard to win this position and keep it. She was constantly told by her male coworkers and even citizens, including other women in Portland that she was not worthy of the police officer position. Many citizens that Baldwin was trying to enforce the laws upon even flatly refused to listen to her, but Baldwin took it in stride and continued to fight to show she was a worthy police woman. Many argue that Baldwin was a successful police woman who was extremely innovative and positively changed the criminal justice profession around the country. Despite all of the criticism that Baldwin had to fight through, she showed that women were capable of holding a position in a male dominated field. Lola Baldwin allowed for other women to be considered for law enforcement positions around the country. It can even be implied that Baldwin was a driving force between the influxes of women into the criminal justice system in the late 1900s. Lola Baldwin paved the way and allowed for other women to be considered for jobs within law enforcement.

Women are constantly fighting an uphill battle for equality, particularly in the criminal justice job field. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Women's right movement allowed for women to enter into a multitude of job fields.

Women even began readily entering the law enforcement field despite outrage and discrimination among many of their male coworkers and society. This period saw many women entering the work force in larger numbers and abandoning the 1950s mentality that women belonged in the home, while men were the bread winners. According to reports by the FBI in 1970 there were 5, 617 female law enforcement officers in the United States. This number grew to well over 9, 000 in 1978 and 30, 000 in 1988. These were drastic number increases and caused an outbreak of anger among many of their male coworkers, as well as the citizens that they were protecting. Law enforcement had been such a male-dominated field and many men did not take kindly to larger numbers of women entering their field of work. The discrimination really held no grounds despite the fact that law enforcement was typically a male-dominated field and women were supposed to be in the home, not doing a man's job.

Coming from a period where women were meant to be dainty mothers only involved in home life, entering a male dominated career such as law enforcement is a drastic jump. The traditional women was supposed to take care of the home, not work in a dangerous field where they could get dirty and hurt. It was often a common belief that women were too weak and fragile to handle an encounter with a criminal. Their male coworkers did not believe that women could protect them as partners and did not want to work with them. While the police test is necessary for entry into the field does have different requirements for women currently, when women were first entering the field in the 1970s they had to take the same physical test that their male counterparts did. This showed that the women were just as

physically prepared for the job as their other coworkers. Studies have also shown that biologically women tend to have: better lowlight and peripheral vision, hearing, memory recall, multitasking skills, are less likely to anger, and are smaller, making cover and concealment easier for them. These are just a few of the advantages women have over their male counterparts, yet it is women who face continual discrimination in the field. When women began moving into this field in the 1970s, they were constantly torn down by their command staff and other officers. They were constantly told they were not good enough, and were often forced into more traditional “ women” roles, being told they should stay off the streets and do the “ desk work” (paperwork) versus dealing with actual issues that male officers got to deal with. There was so much disgust by men during this time period that many older, traditional, male officers quit because they could not stand to work with females. This type of discrimination was common in many police departments all over the United States. Some departments even refused to hire women specifically based on their sex, and if they did hire females, they did everything possible to drive them out and force them to quit. This discrimination was tolerated by those higher in command as well. There was so much anger and rebellion against allowing women to enter this career field, especially in the large numbers that were seen in the 1970s and 1980s. Many women found a way to stand their ground and that they were true police officers. They worked hard to remain in the field and earn respect, constantly fighting an uphill battle, avoiding discrimination and sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment was and is another predominant force of discrimination that many women face within the criminal justice career field. While sexual harassment within these field has gone down due to technology (cameras everywhere) and laws (sexual harassment laws), there are still many women who feel that they face sexual harassment from their male coworkers as well as their superiors. Sexual harassment was the worst for women as they began entering the field in the 1970s. Women were often called inappropriate things by their coworkers as well as by people in the public sector. One officer recalls being called horrific things such as “ slut” and “ bitch” and having derogatory sexual comments made towards her as she was arresting a male offender. Many other female officers recall the same experience. However, they say that being called and told such things only made them want to prove themselves more and show that they truly belonged in the position. Many women also remember being told by their coworkers that they did not belong in the field and were told sexual things, touched inappropriately and constantly had comments made about them. Many women heard the same thing and had the same reaction from regular citizens. This just led many women to work harder at their job and do everything they could to outshine their male counterparts and prove that women truly belong in the field of policing.

Although there are laws about sexual harassment and technology that makes sexual harassment more traceable, such as cameras, digital recording, etc., many law enforcement women say that they still experience sexual harassment in the work place. In fact, one in every eleven female officers stated that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in

a survey conducted in 2012. This shows that today sexual harassment is still a very prevalent form of discrimination and that many women are still experiencing the same things today that women forty years ago were experiencing. The fact that there is still such a high rate of discrimination makes one wonder if the laws against sexual harassment and for equal opportunity are truly being enforced. Law enforcement officers take an oath to uphold the law and protect everyone, but they cannot seem to uphold sexual harassment laws towards women in their own career. This is likely due to the fact that male officers were still stuck in the patriarchal mentality that males are more dominant. Sexual harassment can also be seen as an intimidation technique used by the male officers in hopes of breaking women and getting them to leave the law enforcement field.

Many women within law enforcement report experiencing a glass ceiling regarding promotions. The term “ glass ceiling” is used to describe situations in which people try to further themselves through promotions and can see the ceiling (the top) but are unable to reach it due to glass (obstacles). In relation to the situation of women and law enforcement, it refers to advancement within their careers. Women look to further themselves and gain positions of command, but are often passed up for the position or are flat out denied advancement. This was prevalent in the 1970s and has continued to today. Today, women have been able to experience some advancement but many still remain as regular police officers. There are approximately two-hundred women police chiefs in agencies within the United States. There are also few women who have managed to gain powerful positions within agencies such as the FBI, DEA, and the Secret

Service. Despite these few successful women, many report looking up at the glass ceiling and being denied advancement. Many report being denied the opportunity to apply/test for higher ranks. This inequality lowers their morale and incentive to work hard at their job. If women feel like they will not be treated equal and given opportunities to advance up the department ladder, they will lose their driving force behind trying to succeed and work hard at their jobs. One women officer reported that she was consistently passed up for opportunities of promotion and eventually “ gave up” and accepted that she was going to be a patrol officer her entire career.

It is examples like this one that take away their drive and make women feel discriminated against among their law enforcement peers. It is not right for male supervisors to discriminate against women just because of their sex if they are qualified in every other way for the job. Women officers report being critiqued and ridiculed for the same mistakes that men make. Male officers that make the same mistakes, such as errors in traffic stops, are offered the chance for promotion, but women are denied. This shows that even when making the same errors, women are passed up for promotion for no reason other than their sex. This causes lack of morale and incentive among women officers and is often very discouraging. If women are constantly looking up at the glass ceiling they are either eventually going to give up or fight to expand and raise the ceiling. There have been examples of both situations occurring within the past. Lola Baldwin is an example of a woman who attempted to raise the glass ceiling. Unfortunately after Baldwin women got distracted with World War I and development of industry and stopped entering the criminal justice field. This again lowered the glass ceiling and

made women in the field almost nonexistent. Then, as the 1970s saw an influx of women in the policing career the glass ceiling began to rise but not too much. However, every time a women is promoted in rank, the glass ceiling continues to rise. It cannot be denied that opportunities for women in law enforcement has greatly increased since 1905 and the 1970s. Clearly the glass ceiling is rising for women and maybe it will eventually be eliminated. However, discrimination will still be present until the glass ceiling is completely broken and women experience the same opportunities as men not just in law enforcement careers, but in all careers.

There is clearly still a long way that women have to go to be truly equal in society and within certain career fields. Law enforcement, one of the most male-dominated fields has been anything but open when accepting women. Women faced large amounts of discrimination of sexual harassment when they entered the field and not much has changed to the present day. Women face a glass-ceiling-effect in which many women are not able to further their careers and experience the same career advancement opportunities that are given to males within the criminal justice field. The lack of women superiors proves this point. Clearly laws are not working to completely eliminate this problem within the law enforcement field. Although numbers of reported discrimination have gone down, the fact that women still report discrimination and sexual harassment further proves the point that sexism lives on and equality has not been achieved yet. It is necessary for male officers and supervisors to unite with their women coworkers and work to fight criminals instead of each other. If more energy was put towards the streets and all of the issues that are happening within the country now

instead of towards fighting discrimination within the law enforcement work force, there would likely be many more successful improvements to law enforcement as a whole. Until there are no more reports of sexual harassment and discrimination within any work force, equality will never be achieved and sexism will continue to live on.