



Tackling the Issue of Gender Pay Gap

This editorial is based on [“It pays to fix gender wage disparity”](#) which was published in the Economic Times on 19/03/2023. It discusses the issue of gender parity in India and ways to address the same.

For Prelims: Gender Pay Gap, Women and Men in India 2022, World Inequality Report 2022, Article 39(d), Article 42, Article 15(1), Article 15(2), The Equal Remuneration Act, The Maternity Benefit Act

For Mains: Tackling the Issue of Gender pay gap, Reasons for the Gender Pay Gap

Gender Pay Gap in India refers to the difference in average wages or earnings between men and women in the country. Despite constitutional provisions and various efforts to promote gender equality, the gender pay gap remains a significant issue in India.

According to the Report [“Women and Men in India 2022”](#) released by the National Statistical, **wage disparity between men and women has widened over the past decade**, with the gap opening up further at higher wage levels.

Men in India capture 82% of labour income, while women earn just 18%, according to the first-ever estimates of the gender inequality in global earnings presented in the [World Inequality Report 2022](#) released.

To address the gender pay gap, **there is a need for greater awareness and advocacy around the issue**, as well as policy measures that promote gender equality and economic empowerment of women.

What are the Reasons for the Gender Pay Gap?

- **Occupational Segregation:**
 - Women tend to be **concentrated in lower-paying occupations, such as caregiving and administrative work**, while men are overrepresented in higher-paying industries like technology, engineering, and finance.
- **Discrimination:**
 - Women may **face bias in hiring, promotions, and pay, even when their qualifications and experience are equal** to those of their male colleagues.
- **Workforce Participation:**
 - Women are **more likely to take time off or work part-time to care for children or elderly relatives**, which can lead to interruptions in their career paths and lower overall earnings.
- **Negotiation:**
 - Women are **less likely to negotiate for higher pay or benefits because the opportunities for them are less**, which can result in lower compensation packages.
- **Limited Access to Education and Training:**

- Women may have **less access to educational and training opportunities, due to patriarchal beliefs that girls and women must be the ones doing household labour.**
- It can limit their ability to acquire the skills and credentials necessary for higher-paying jobs.
- **Inability to Work Irregular Hours:**
 - Many jobs **require employees to work irregular hours, such as overtime or night shifts** and due to security reasons women are unable to work irregular hours.
 - This can result in women being passed over for promotions or being paid less than men who can work more flexible schedules.
- **Lack of Mobility to Reach Job Sites:**
 - Women are **also more likely to have transportation challenges**, such as lack of access to reliable transportation, which can limit their ability to reach job sites. This can **result in women being excluded from certain jobs** or industries, which can limit their earning potential.
- **Discontinuity of Experience owing to Family Responsibilities:**
 - Women are more **likely than men to take time off work to care for children or other family members.** This can result in a discontinuity of experience, making it harder for women to advance in their careers and earn higher salaries.

What are the Related Initiatives/Constitutional Provisions?

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - The Constitution of India guarantees equal pay for equal work for both men and women under Article 39(d) and Article 42. It also prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender under Article 15(1) and Article 15(2).
- **The Equal Remuneration Act:**
 - This act was passed in 1976 to ensure that men and women receive equal pay for equal work. The act applies to all organizations, whether public or private, and covers both regular and casual employees.
- **The Maternity Benefit Act:**
 - This act provides for maternity leave and other benefits to women employees. It was amended in 2017 to increase the duration of maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks.
- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act:**
 - This act was passed in 2013 to provide protection against sexual harassment at the workplace. It requires all employers to establish a mechanism for redressal of complaints and to ensure that women are not discriminated against in terms of pay and conditions of work.
- **Others:**
 - In 2022, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced a “pay equity policy”, saying that its centrally-contracted men and women players would get the same match fees.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Strengthening Legislation:**
 - Existing laws can be strengthened and new legislation can be introduced to prevent gender discrimination in the workplace. For instance, the [Equal Remuneration Act, 1976](#) can be enforced more rigorously to ensure equal pay for equal work.
- **Providing Training and Development:**
 - Women employees can be provided with training and development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge, which can help them to advance in their careers and negotiate better salaries.
- **Empowering Women:**
 - Women can be encouraged to negotiate for better pay and benefits by providing them

better opportunities, and to take up leadership positions in their organizations. This can help break the cycle of gender discrimination and lead to more women in leadership roles.

▪ **Ensure Equal Distribution of Work:**

- The burden of household work and childcare often falls disproportionately on women, which can limit their ability to work outside the home or to advance in their careers.
- To address this, it is important to promote a more equitable distribution of household work and childcare duties between women and men.
- This can be achieved through policies such as parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and affordable childcare services.

Drishti Mains Question

Despite constitutional provisions and various efforts, the gender pay gap continues to persist in India. Analyse the factors responsible for the gender pay gap and critically evaluate the measures needed to address this issue in the country.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Which of the following gives 'Global Gender Gap Index' ranking to the countries of the world? (2017)

- (a) World Economic Forum
- (b) UN Human Rights Council
- (c) UN Women
- (d) World Health Organization

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- The Global Gender Gap Report is published by the World Economic Forum. Hence, option A is correct.
- The report's Gender Gap Index, which is designed to measure gender equality ranks countries, according to the calculated gender gap between women and men in four key areas: health, education, economy and politics to gauge the state of gender equality in a country.
- The Global Gender Gap Report 2021 benchmarks 156 countries on their progress towards gender parity across four thematic dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity; Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. In addition, this year's edition studied skills gender gaps related to Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- India ranks 140th in WEF Gender Gap Index-2021.