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## Gender Inequality in the Workplace

Katelyn Barger

*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

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**Gender Inequality in the Workplace: An Analysis of How Stereotypes, the Gender Wage Gap, and the Lack of Women in Leadership Positions Impact the Entirety of Society**

**By**

**Katelyn Brynn Barger**

**Advisor: Sarah Jensen**

**An Honors Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Finance**

**Sam M. Walton College of Business  
University of Arkansas  
Fayetteville, Arkansas**

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## **Introduction**

To the blind eye, it seems that society has progressed to the point where gender inequality is not seen as an issue, as it was in the past. With new laws implemented throughout the years, women have gained various rights and thus are happy with how the world works right now. Right? To put it simply, no. While various practices have been put in place to limit this gender inequality, the root issue comes from the minds of officials who have been implemented with this stereotypical ideal that women simply cannot achieve what as well a man can accomplish. It is not at fault of those certain individuals but with society at large and how we are implementing these stereotypes into the upbringing of the younger generations.

This paper goes on to analyze the history of gender inequality in the workplace, the detailed nature of issues that society faces, research in today's world, and how to aid in the removal of gender stereotypes and thus removing consequences, unbeknownst to women a lot of the time. The goal of this analysis is to broaden the view of the reader and gain perspective into a world, which may or may not be familiar to them.

Staying on the current trajectory of progress made in gender biases, not only women but the rest of society will suffer from this slow-moving change. Serious changes need to be made in the minds of younger generations as well as appointed officials in government as well as corporations to fully make society feel the repercussions. Understanding why gender inequality exists can minimize the stereotypes created, shrink the wage gap, and produce an equal distribution of both men and women in leadership-oriented positions.

## **History of Gender Inequality**

To preface gender inequality, this analysis will only be addressing the difference between the two genders, not including the infinite other genders that exist including non-binary, genderqueer, gender fluid, and so on and so forth. At any point when discussing, 'the two genders', it is referring to 'men and women' and not just stating that these are exclusively the only two genders to exist. These labels are all respected and recognized, but for the purpose of this paper, will not be discussed in greater detail.

To be ready to discuss the idea of sexism, it is vital to address the history of multiple topics concerning this discrimination. This section will discuss these points of discussion: the assumption that women are only meant to be mothers, the idea of anti-stereotyping, and information of how the wage gap came to be.

### **I. Assumption that Women are Only Meant to be Mothers**

The idea that women are only meant for childcare or just care of society in general while men are always presumed to be the breadwinners of society is hurtful to both men and women. These false narratives create this idea of disparity between the sexes starting from home-life. This further impacts how spouses see each other and then will eventually impact the children's' view of both parents. Multiple court cases instilled this idea starting in 1948.

In *Goesaert v Cleary*, the Supreme Court continued to uphold the statute saying that women were not allowed to be bar owners, despite the vast improvements in society due to WW2 and the excess of jobs in the U.S. while men fought overseas. The following is written in *The Two Laws of Sex Stereotyping*:

"[T]he fact that women may now have achieved the virtues that men have long claimed as their prerogatives and now indulge in vices that men have long practiced, does not preclude the States from drawing a sharp line between the sexes, certainly, in such matters as the regulation of the liquor traffic" (Ben-Asher, 2016).

From this statement, anyone can clearly see the sexism of women not being allowed to handle liquor sales back during the war, even though they had to endure the pain of little money and raising children at the same time. This inherent nature of this need for separation of the sexes starts from here and only escalates. Then in 1975, the Supreme Court case of *Stanton v Stanton* further validated that men need to make money in households in order for society to work. The court decided that guardians needed to, “support boys until the age of twenty-one but girls only until the age of eighteen” (Ben-Asher, 2016). Forcing women to marry early due to societal standards and the need for a stable income, which could not be generated from them solely due to sex discrimination pushed women to fight for equality.

Powerful strides were made in the years to come and in 1979, just four years after *Stanton v Stanton*, in *Orr v Orr*, the courts reversed the notion that it is just the man’s responsibility to care for his family and gender discrimination can no longer be a statute used in court (Ben-Asher, 2016). This court case was monumental because Justice Brennan stated that women are not only meant to be mothers and that they have the same capacity to be in the workplace as men. It is important to note that this did not change how places of business saw women, but more just asserted the idea that in the eyes of the courtroom, it would be illegal to think of the two genders as unequal.

Change came with the *Price Waterhouse v Hopkins* in 1989 where the courts found that Waterhouse violated Title VII’s antidiscrimination prohibition against Ann Hopkins. She was the only woman candidate against eighty-eight other candidates. The ripple of this case was massive because it explicitly clarified that it is also illegal to discriminate against a woman due to her femininity complex. This leads the fight into gender stereotypes in other capacities, outside of just merely hiring purposes.

## II. The Idea of Anti-Stereotyping

The concept that one wrong decision from a man does not equate to one wrong decision a woman makes is irrational and would be thought of as improbable (De Coster & Zanoni, 2019). When truly in society, this misconception in society leads down a more unreasonable path.

Ever since the ‘70s, anti-stereotyping has become widely spread but not endorsed due to many inconsistencies (Ben-Asher, 2016). Though illegal in court to discriminate against sex, gender norms are forced upon even the youngest of generations with dress-codes adhering to certain policies. This misconstrues the idea of femininity and masculinity as things that must be enforced for society to respect an individual. Ben-Asher states it best that, “the main problem with sex stereotyping is that it supports the subordination of women to men” which makes the idea of women in powerful positions seem like an uncomfortable and unlikely situation. When stereotypes are used as rationale for hiring, it creates unequal opportunities so easily. For example, promoting an employee to a CEO position should be based on work experience, leadership skills, and morals. Sometimes what it comes down to is a difference of gender between two candidates and because of toxic masculinity, society perceives men as adverse to real emotion and can get a job done without thinking twice about it. In actuality, a woman is just as capable as a man of overcoming emotion to fire an individual or make a hard decision in the workplace.

The one who practically made gender discrimination a legal concept was the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg (Filipovic, 2020). She has made history of someone who fought every gender norm associated with her and made her way to the supreme court as an associate justice. Over time, she has become seen as a feminist icon and paved the way for redefining gender norms. A great example comes from the *Reed v Reed* case in 1971. Ginsburg was involved in the gender

revolution in cases such as, “Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, and later statutes such as the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (“FMLA”)” (Ben-Asher, 2016). Her involvement in these cases showed that women could be mothers, wives, and working women all at the same time. Ginsburg’s ideas were two-fold: assimilate women into the job market and do not condone the idea of a stay-at-home father. These ideals will lead society in the right direction and enforce the idea that equality is at work in America.

### III. Information on the Gender Wage Gap

The gender wage gap is, “when women aren’t paid the same amount as men for doing the same amount of work” (McAuliffe, 2019). People misinterpret this idea as just from the type of work individuals do, meaning men would normally be paid on the higher end of this scale. This is not an accurate representation of what it entails, when it truly includes discrimination practices and other causes.

The history of these issues stem from data in the 1970s. McAuliffe states that, “the median usual weekly earnings of full-time working women was 37.9 percent less than that of men.” Multiple reasons for this disparity come from location (city or suburb), type of career, and unequal opportunities in the two genders. Over the past four decades (since the ‘80s), women have been increasingly entering the workplace due to higher education levels resulting in, “a 38-40% overall reduction in the gender pay gap” (Blau & Kahn, 2017). This is great news, but the problem is that if society continues only an approximated 10% decrease in the pay gap, equal pay may not be a possibility for another forty years. To effectively change how society views women and create equality, this issue is a necessity to recognize and understand.

The interesting thing to note is that as time has passed, one would think that the percentage of earnings of full-time working women to men has significantly shrunk considering new laws and a more liberal-minded society, but this is not the case. In 2007, this number went from almost 38 percent to only 21.5 percent (McAuliffe, 2019). This does not even consider the mere fact that women need more education to be considered for the same positions as men in the same field.

By 2019, for the first time, college-educated women outnumbered college-educated men in the American workforce” (Butchireddygari, 2019). Even with this impressive statistic, the wage gap still exists, and it is almost a requirement for women to obtain an additional degree to seem equivalent to a man applying for the same position. This inherent discrimination is shown clearly in the numbers and reasoning behind it, which will be discussed further later on.

## Issues to Address

There are three main societal problems to focus on and try to fix over time: labor stereotyping, the wage gap, and leadership roles. All of these issues are not from some made-up narrative that society claims are the case. There is true bias in all areas of employment, specifically in gender biases.

### I. Rejecting the Traditional Division of Labor Stereotyping

The idea that there are these expected careers for both women and men to have in society damages the image of what a typical employee should look like. This not only hurts women but also men’s image in whatever workplace they choose to work in. This idea of rejecting stereotypes was made famously known by the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The concerning part with a simple non-harmful assumption can have long-lasting effects on what an individual should do with their life. If a young girl is taught that she is only meant to be a mother, then

throughout her lifetime, whenever she thinks of potentially having a career, the idea in her mind is frowned upon.

The same concept goes for the traditional notion that women have these hyper emotions which lead them to irrational decision-making. This is a preconceived idea that society has implanted into the minds of people. Men and women both possess these emotions because all people are given these sets of human emotions from birth. The assumption that men are strong, and women are weak is damaging to society. Any man or woman can add great value to the workplace, in whatever positions they are hired into. Every single person is different and produces a different set of skills.

## II. Wage Gap

There is an 18 cent difference wage gap between the woman and male average (McAuliffe, 2019). This roughly comes out to a \$10,000 difference per year. Many people have arguments stating that this wage gap is a figment of the imagination due to career and lifestyle differences. The NYT debunked this theory by stating that in the culinary industry, for example, “female food preparers earn 87 percent of what male food preparers earn” (McAuliffe, 2019). This is a smaller difference than the normal wage gap, but for the same exact position in the industry. Throughout all of society, we have both men and women in similar or the exact same positions with a gap in their salaries for no reason. Women should not be paid less on the basis of their motherhood or “emotional” status. The idea that a woman would make more irrational decisions than a man merely based on her emotional state is preposterous.

To get into the reasons why this wage gap exists, this is divided into five sections: The Equal Pay Act, occupational segregation, financial sacrifices, professional differences, and racial discrimination as well.

### A. The Equal Pay Act of 1963

This act demands: “Jobs require equal skill (ability, education, and training), equal effort (physical and mental exertion), equal responsibility, and equal working conditions (physical surroundings and hazards) shall be paid equal wages” (Henkin, 2020). One would assume this is an all-encompassing law that makes unequal pay illegal, and thus making the wage gap non-existent. This is not the case, considering from current job positions, there is unequal pay in every single field.

The fine print of this act is the issue, considering that ultimately it is up to the employer to discern the reasoning behind pay. This can be explained by longevity, competency of the role, and leadership eligibility. Due to these infinite reasonings, it is nearly impossible to win a court case if one were to press legal charges for unfair pay. Leaving this decision up to employer discretion without check leaves room for bias.

The only way to resolve the issue of unequal pay would be to dissolve the issue of pay secrecy, which is a social norm and common practice of not discussing paychecks with other employees. When employers pay their employees without any of them interacting with other employees at a firm, it is way more likely for this discrimination to occur. Wage negotiation is another reason for not discussing pay, but it should be standard for men and women to receive the same negotiation opportunities. Henkin states it best: “Pay secrecy and exclusion from leadership made it impossible for some of the women to determine if earning the advanced degree affected the pay gap between them and their male colleagues.” Due to this problem, there needs to be transparency in pay structures with job positions and gender of the individual. There is a vast array of workplace issues for the different genders, but this is where things need to start.

## B. Occupational Segregation

Another huge obstacle in the battle of the wage gap argument is the assumption that women tend to choose professions that pay less, like a schoolteacher for example. The truth of the matter is that they are only given these options a lot of the time due to stereotypical norms and the difficulty of entering a range of other fields that are mostly male-dominated.

## C. Financial Sacrifices

Many times, in the home, men are paid more than women and thus families are in need of the most money that they can earn. Employers will then reduce women's hours making it not a free choice (Henkin, 2020). Due to this minimization of time at work, it is more financially likely that the family will go with the man's profession to make 100% of the income, and the woman stays home. Sometimes women enjoy this idea of a stay-at-home whereas others are forced because the majority of the time, it is improbable to make the man quit his higher paying job.

## D. Professional Differences

An argument for the inexistence of the wage gap comes from individuals saying that the wage gap exists because of the contrast of women versus men's fields of work. And a lot of the time, women are in predominantly less paying jobs, for whatever that reason may be. The issue that comes to fruition is that even when these individuals are in the same exact field with the same exact position, men are paid more on average. If this issue was only a professional difference, it would make sense, but this exists in all careers across the board.

## E. Racial Discrimination

This gender wage gap inadvertently affects women of color on an even larger scale than white women. In 2017, Latinx women were paid 47% less, and Black women 39% less than White men (Hegewisch, 2020). These are much wider gaps in pay than even the average white woman. This issue affects not only over half of society [women] but racially different households as well. All of the previous problems stated in this analysis are only heightened for people of color, which is why this issue is so crucial to understand.

## III. Current Leadership

The implicit biases that society holds impact the image of typical leadership. The normal person would assume their boss will be a strong yet level-headed white, heterosexual male who devotes his whole life to work. This is not meant to be said under the assumption that this is necessarily incorrect for this person in leadership, but the problem is assuming that this is the only person that comes to mind for everyone. The human brain is meant to imagine what someone will be or look like to make the introduction process of meeting them easier.

These biases matter because of current leadership. Women are increasingly entering male-dominated fields but as they do, they are shown significant obstacles in not seeing the potential for advancements in their field: "Tech giants like Apple and Google are among the fastest growing companies in the world, leading innovations in design and development. So why is that only 5% of senior executives in the tech industry are female?" (Branson, 2018). This startling statistic shows how times have not really changed as much as one would want to believe. Though more women are now college-educated than men, these typical male leadership positions have not seen big strides in the direction of change.

The future of women in leadership at Fortune 500 companies was done and it is that, "the median percentage of women on boards in 2015 is 20.2%, which is predicted to increase to 25.6% in 2030 if the trend post 2010 were to continue for the next 15 years" (Sojo, Wood, Wood, & Wheeler, 2016). This data shows that society is progressing but at such a slow rate, that it will take multiple decades before workplaces are considered 'equal' at all even with these



policies in place. With women in power, people would have an initial stereotypical view of these officials, but that issue could soon disappear, or at least dissipate if there was equal distribution of both men and women in the same positions. Higher female representation in the workplace can change the public's current perception of women in authoritative positions and the impact this will have on households as well. Current leadership is not representative of a wide range of ideas that could easily be changed.

## **Research**

To further defend the evidence that has been shown through time, the following details of this survey were conducted by Katelyn Barger and Sarah Jensen. The main point of this research was to find information across a wide range of ages and of the genders, over topics such as educational choices, leadership stereotypes, and gender bias (including the wage gap).

The data gathered was from 235 anonymous people who voluntarily took this survey within a four-day time span. Of these 235, 200 (see Appendix Figure 10) were people who aged in the range of 18-24 (roughly 85.1% of the participants), giving the survey a more accurate representation of the adults entering the workforce today. Of all the respondents, only 86 chose to select "male" as their gender in the poll (see Appendix Figure 9). Lastly, 87.23% of the survey takers are currently working towards or have a bachelor's degree or higher (see Appendix Figure 1). These statistics will be considered when discussing the reasoning behind the respondents' answers.

As stated earlier, the biggest reason for women to go to college was due to the need for higher education in order to gain the same position as a man with a lower degree. Through the research conducted, the overall reason for respondents to get an undergraduate degree was to "improve employment opportunities" (see Appendix Figure 2). Out of the 115 respondents who said this, 73 were women. The second most popular answer for men was "to increase earning potential" while the second most popular with women was "it was always assumed you were going." This data is interesting because it seems that the inherent decision of going to college is for men to make more money than a career without a degree, while with the females it shows that families value this educational opportunity for women.

These answers shift when deciding graduate school decision-making. Of the people who are planning, have gone, or will go to graduate school, the largest response was "to increase earning potential" (see Appendix Figure 3), the same answer as the male's main reason for undergraduate school. When looking at the next most popular responses for the genders, the women wanted higher earning potential then to learn more about an interesting field while men chose higher earning potential then improving employment opportunities. The interesting comparison that can be made is that women see college as a learning experience whereas men see it as a jump-start into a career. Then the argument can be made then since men have this innate sense of the assumed role of being leaders, they would choose this response.

Overwhelmingly, the most anticipated response of the survey came from a simple yes or no answer. Of the 235 respondents, 36 participants answered "yes" to "men are more qualified to be leaders" (see Appendix Figure 4). The critical fact to point out is that this survey is that out of the 100% of people, roughly only 36% were men. From this standpoint, approximately 1/3 of the male's respondent that they innately believe men are more qualified, regardless of job or education level. When the same calculations are done, a mere 7% of the women surveyed believed men to be superior leaders regardless of any other information. An additional fact to add is that the 7% of women included only one aged higher than 47, while the other six were aged

from 18-24 which is a shocking statistic. This question is highly important because this shows the innate bias that even the current upcoming generation has in making leadership decisions. This further proves this innate bias does, in fact, exist.

Moving on to gender bias at work, as confirmed by historical evidence and this poll taken, the majority of respondents somewhat agree that there are these gender biases in the work environment, 100 respondents to be exact (see Appendix Figure 5). In total, 52.77% of the respondents either somewhat or highly agree there are biases, 13.19% said they somewhat or highly disagree, and 34.04% had no opinion (or were neutral). This accurately represents the findings of this thesis, that the majority of people know well that there is a problem in society currently that needs to be confronted head on.

The wage gap is one of the most prevalent points that people address when discussing gender differences at work. As priorly discussed, there is an evident pay gap between the genders. When survey takers were posed with the question “Do you believe that men and women with the exact same position/skill level are paid differently?”, almost 73% said “Yes” (see Appendix Figure 6). Among the respondents, came some responses that were shocking to uncover being that approximately 23% of people believe there is not a pay differential and a few answers that could not fall into either category. Nearly all respondents that chose “Other” wrote that it depends on the field, which is completely accurate. Some work environments will have a pay differential that’s even more substantial if it’s a male-dominated field. Yet again, males dominated the less popular response with 37 out of the 53 “No, there is no pay differential” which immediately signals this inherent bias taught to males, or else this number would be way skewed towards females because of the high number of women survey takers.

With gender roles, two questions were posed near the end of the survey, containing if they believe traditional gender roles exist and then if they believe these gender roles should be taught. Over 81% of the respondents believe there are traditional gender roles, confirming evidence that throughout history, prior generations have instilled these values throughout all types of families. A startling 76.6% of the respondents believe that gender roles should not be taught (see Appendix Figure 8). This signifies that society wants to progress, and venture away from traditional ideas of boys having to be one way and girls having to be another.

In totality, this research shed new light on the meaning of gender inequality. It gives a new glance at today’s perceptions. As a result, some revelations are shown of this innate bias in action, from believing that in general men are just better leaders and that some people still do not understand that the genders are paid unequally. It seems that society is moving itself in the right direction, but it is still going to take a while for change to be made. Hopefully, this research can help to shed light that there is a problem with gender inequality at work and aid to fix that.

## **Conclusion**

The idea of inferiority in men versus women is stomach-churning. All different types of people - age, gender, race, etc. - can have the same life and career goals. A difference in gender identity should not delegitimize any aspiration one might have. The only way to make change in the current standing of these norms is to recognize these unequal practices and try to, as best as possible, to fight these standards. Understanding why gender inequality exists can minimize the stereotypes created, shrink the wage gap, and produce an equal distribution of both men and women in leadership-oriented positions.

How to fix these issues results in two facets. The first is the process of awareness. It is vital to be conscious of the inherent discrimination and stereotypical fashion that separates these

two genders. Comprehending and recognizing that these exist can normalize the importance of discussing these issues. The other huge solution is to normalize men becoming caregivers, thus women not automatically assuming that role. It should be made clear that neither option is bad, and the role of caregiver is highly respected. There just needs to be this concept that either gender can or should assume the role on a case-by-case basis.

Society today has shown great progress in law-making and societal standards but there is a long way to go. In today's society, companies are demonstrating great strides towards equality, but not at a great enough rate to speed up this inequality. Also, the issue of female domesticity, or the idea that the woman is meant for the home, needs to dissipate. In today's world, people still joke about women only being made for cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children, which is absolutely not the truth. As data shown previously, more women have a college education today than men. It is amazing that society has progressed this far, but it is important to strive for equality, and not the betterment of just one gender. With this new fact, it's more vital now than ever to see where society is at in terms of pay, stereotypes, and leadership despite this statistic.

The future for women is looking greater every single day. The crucial fact of the matter is that gender equality is necessary for not only women but more families and the entirety of society. Civilization is dependent on women as half the society and this impacts households today and future generations for setting the standard for equality. If change is not implemented sooner, equality will not even be a somewhat possibility until roughly 2060. People need to have a better approach when entering new friendships, workplace relationships, and the general discernment of equality in everyday life. These strides will speed up the equality process and create a better future for all.

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## Appendix

Q1 - What is your highest achieved level of education or degree currently working

towards?

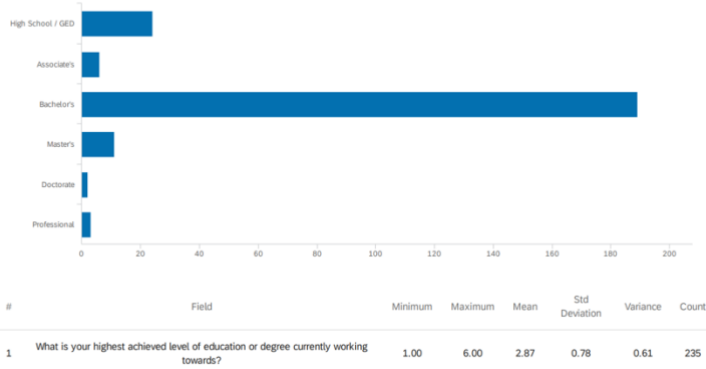


Figure 1 -

Q2 - Why did you get your undergraduate degree or why are you working towards getting

this degree? Please choose the most important reason for you personally.

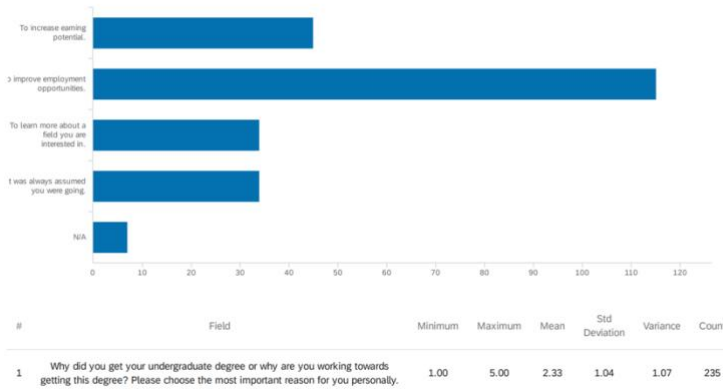


Figure 2 -

Q3 - What are your reasons for going, planning on going, or having gone to graduate

school?

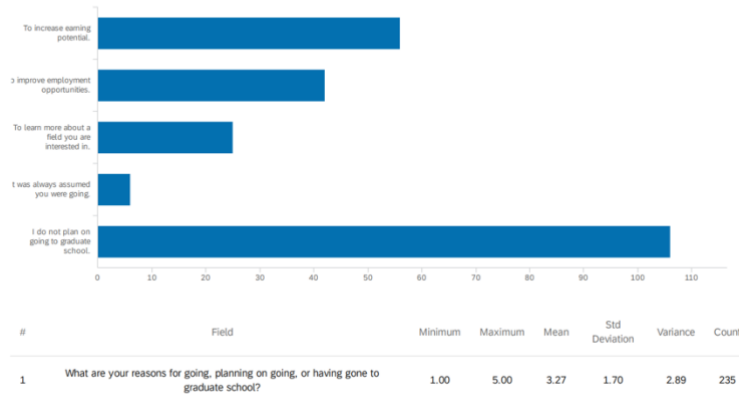
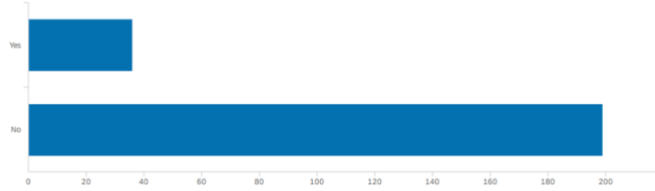


Figure 3 -

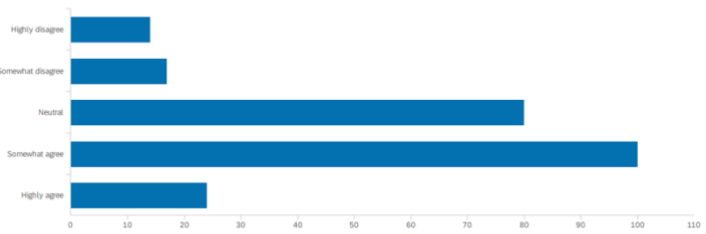
Q4 - In general, do you think men are more qualified to be leaders?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	In general, do you think men are more qualified to be leaders?	1.00	2.00	1.85	0.36	0.13	235

Figure 4 -

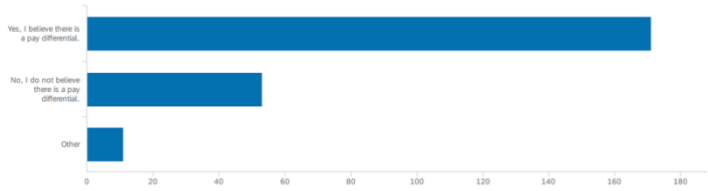
Q5 - How would you rate the level of gender bias at work? [bias when being hired on staff]



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How would you rate the level of gender bias at work? [bias when being hired on staff]	1.00	5.00	3.44	0.98	0.95	235

Figure 5 -

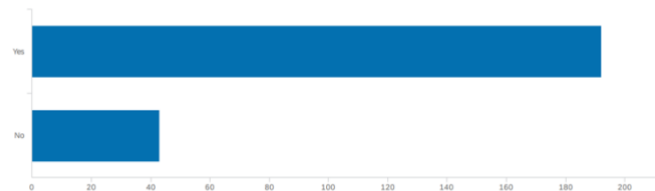
Q6 - Do you believe that men and women with the exact same position/skill level are paid differently?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you believe that men and women with the exact same position/skill level are paid differently? - Selected Choice	1.00	3.00	1.32	0.56	0.31	235

Figure 6 -

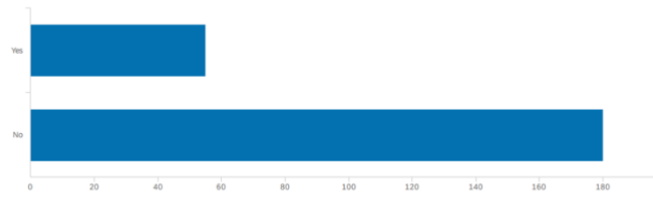
Q7 - Do you think there are traditional gender roles?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you think there are traditional gender roles?	1.00	2.00	1.18	0.39	0.15	235

Figure 7 -

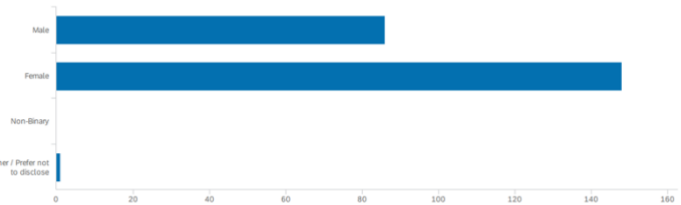
Q8 - Do you believe that gender roles should be taught?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you believe that gender roles should be taught?	1.00	2.00	1.77	0.42	0.18	235

Figure 8 -

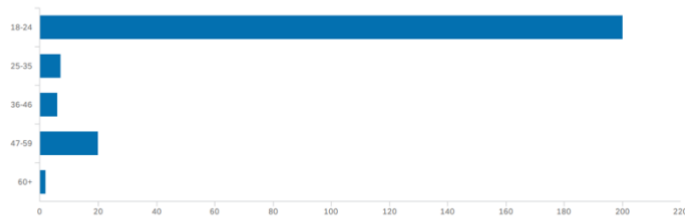
Q9 - What is your gender?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your gender?	1.00	4.00	1.64	0.51	0.26	235

Figure 9 -

Q10 - How old are you?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How old are you?	1.00	5.00	1.37	0.95	0.90	235

Figure 10 -