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GA2: Economic and Financial Committee (ECOFIN)

# Research Report

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Topic 2: Addressing with gravity the decline in the female work force as a result of inequality



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## Introduction

Lack of equal opportunities, pay, and treatment, are examples of what results from gender inequality in a workplace. Furthermore, the gender pay gap, the “glass ceiling,” unconscious bias, harassment, and stereotypes regarding women are what also originates from gender inequality and old-fashioned management of a workplace. Women deal and have dealt with these issues on a daily basis since the mid 20th century, and this has resulted in lack of motivation and rise of depression among women, economic decline, more financial pressure on the male population, and reinforcement of sexist stereotypes. Additionally, even though the global gender pay gap has decreased by 0.4 percentage points between 2006 and 2025, employment has also decreased for women.

## Definition of Key Terms

**ILO:** The International Labour Organization is a U.N. agency that sets labour standards, develops policies and devises programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

**Beijing declaration:** The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, adopted by 189 countries, is the most comprehensive and transformative global agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

**Glass ceiling:** An unacknowledged barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities.

**Labour income:** Labour income is the income individuals earn from working. It includes their wages, bonuses, and any extra payments from a job.

**Capital income:** Money earned from assets such as property, patents, or machinery and typically benefitting wealthier individuals labour income is the main livelihood source for most people.

**Large informal economy:** A country that has a large informal economy is a country where a large part of the economy is neither taxed, nor regulated by any form of government. The jobs people work, their employers, and the goods and services they produce are not accounted for in official records and data.

## Background Information

In recent years, progress toward gender equality in labour markets has stalled and, in some countries, declined. The increase of gender pay gaps and workplace gender inequality and neglect towards women's needs are resulting factors. A major setback came during the COVID-19 pandemic, when women experienced higher job losses and were more likely than men to leave the workforce, largely due to increased unpaid care and childcare responsibilities when schools and services closed. This resulted in an unsaid expectation for women to leave work in case of family or economic inconveniences and set many standards of gender equality from pre-covid era back and resulted in the neglect of collective goals for decreasing the gender pay-gap.

Even after the pandemic, structural inequalities continue to hinder women's participation: persistent gender norms, unequal distribution of unpaid care work, limited access to affordable childcare, and wage and occupational segregation keep women in lower-paid, part-time, or precarious employment and reduce their ability to stay in or return to the labour force. While there have been small signs of recovery in female labour force participation since 2020, overall participation remains below pre-pandemic parity levels and far from full equality; especially in regions where barriers to women's employment are deep-rooted.

## Major Countries and Organisations Involved

**India:** India has a weak enforcement of workplace equality laws, limited public childcare infrastructures, and has put in place safety and mobility restrictions for women. Furthermore, its large informal economy excludes women from having a stable employment. As a result, around 73% of women leave the workforce after marriage and childbirth.

**Saudi Arabia:** Although recent reforms have improved women's employment access, women's economic participation has been limited. In Saudi Arabia, guardianship laws and gender-segregated labour markets restrict women's ability to work. As a result of these measures, educated women are often seen as less valuable in the economy.

**Japan:** In Japan, working demands long hours, often without the promise of flexibility or childcare. Moreover, gender-biased promotions, as well as the expectation that women will leave the workforce after childbirth are still present in Japanese culture. Because of this, women have still decided to leave the workforce after childbirth even though the percentage of employed women has increased.

**Pakistan:** Pakistan has legal inequality in employment and inheritance rights, which makes the acceptance of women in the workforce more difficult. Pakistan also has a limited enforcement of labour protections for women, and women have limited access to education and safe transport. These factors could explain why Pakistan's female workforce is among the lowest globally, with women only representing 22.85% of Pakistan's workforce in 2024, according to the UNDP's Human Development Report in 2025.

**United States:** The United States does not have a federally mandated maternity leave. Families in the U.S. pay an average of \$1 282 for the full-time care of one child, so the cost of childcare is particularly high. Furthermore, the protections against workplace discrimination can be seen as weak compared to Denmark, which has one of the strongest worker protections in the world. This leads to around 24% of women leaving the workforce after childbirth.

**ILO:** This organization, although it cannot guarantee compliance, sets global labour standards such as maternity leave, and it advises governments on labour laws.

## Relevant UN Resolutions

### 1. [62/206. Women in development \(19 December 2007\)](#)<sup>1</sup>

*(only some relevant clauses are mentioned)*

**“4. Stresses** the importance of creating a favourable and conducive national and international environment in all fields of life for the effective integration of women in development;

**5. Urges** Member States, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system to accelerate further efforts to increase the number of women in decision-making and to build their capacity as agents of change, and to empower women to participate actively and effectively in the development, implementation and evaluation of national development and/or poverty eradication policies, strategies and programmes, including, where appropriate, programme-based approaches;

**8. Calls upon** Member States to continue to increase women's representation and participation in government decision-making at all levels in development policy areas to ensure that the

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Women in Development*, A/RES/62/206, 62nd Session, adopted 19 December 2007, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n07/476/13/pdf/n0747613.pdf>

priorities, needs and contributions of women are taken into consideration by, inter alia, providing access to training; developing measures to reconcile family and professional responsibilities; and eliminating gender stereotyping in appointments and promotions;

**13. Urges** all Member States to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women with regard to their access to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit, giving special attention to poor, uneducated women, and to support women's access to legal assistance; and to encourage the financial sector to mainstream gender perspectives in their policies and programmes"

2. *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (18 December 2008)*<sup>2</sup>

*(only some relevant clauses are mentioned)*

**“4. Calls upon** Governments, the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, and all sectors of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, as well as all women and men, to fully commit themselves and to intensify their contributions to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session;

**11. Strongly encourages** Governments to continue to support the role and contribution of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations and women's organizations, in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session;

**12. Resolves** to intensify the efforts of its Main Committees and subsidiary bodies to fully mainstream a gender perspective in their work, including by paying more attention to issues related to the status of women under their consideration and within their mandates, as well as in all United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions and in their follow-up processes;

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and Full Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, A/RES/63/159, 63rd Session, adopted 18 December 2008, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n08/480/33/pdf/n0848033.pdf>

**24. Urges** Governments and the United Nations system to take further steps to ensure the integration of a gender perspective and the full and equal participation of women in all efforts to promote peace and security, including in peace negotiations, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict situations, as well as to increase their role in decision-making at all levels, including through the development of national action plans and strategies”

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

**Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system:** Report of the Secretary-General issued on April 12th, 2021. This report focuses on efforts being made by the United Nations to strengthen gender equality in the United Nations “through the implementation of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”, in the context of COVID-19.

**Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women:** Ninetieth session issued in February 2025. This committee adopted several measures to protect women in the workforce and reduce inequalities such as, ending sexual harassment against women and girls with disabilities and placing women at the centre of recovery as an economic diversification strategy in order to reduce inequalities between women and men.

## Possible Solutions

Enforcing equal pay and declining the gender wage-gap, stronger focus on equality in workplaces and legislations regarding the matter.

Introducing paid parental leave for both parents helps redistribute caregiving roles and supports women’s long-term workforce participation, as well as reforming gender stereotypes that allow gender inequality.

Governments and international organizations can improve gender equality and share best practices through UN agencies such as ILO, UN Women, and ECOSOC.

Encouraging flexible working hours, remote work options, and protections for part-time workers helps women balance paid work with caregiving responsibilities without sacrificing job security.

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