

‘The patriarchy runs deep’: women still getting a raw deal in the workplace as equality remains a dream by Sarah Johnson_ *The Guardian*, Dec 2025

5 “Gender inequality is one of the most entrenched and significant problems of our time,” says Jocelyn Chu, a programme director at UN Women, responding to the stark figures contained in this year’s World Inequality report, which labels gender inequality a “defining and persistent feature of the global economy”.

10 Women work longer and earn just a third – 32% – of what men get per hour, when paid and unpaid labour, such as domestic work, are taken into account. Even when unpaid domestic labour is not included, women only earn 61% of what men make, according to the report.

Those aged 15 to 64 work 10 hours more a week, on average, than men. They earned just over a quarter (about 28%) in 2025 of total income around the world, a share that has barely shifted over the past 35 years.

15 The report, prefaced by leading economists Jayati Ghosh and Joseph Stiglitz, reveals that the richest 10% of the global population own close to three-quarters of all wealth, while the poorest half hold barely 2%, and looks at how inequality affects every aspect of people’s lives.

When it comes to gender, it noted that despite decades of anti-discrimination laws and advocacy, equality remains a distant dream.

20 “It’s not surprising,” says Chu, who adds that gender inequality has continued to be entrenched in recent years with “the backsliding of democratic institutions and threats to women’s rights”.

Women work more hours than men everywhere, according to the report. The largest gaps in working hours are between 12 to 13 a week in the Middle East and north Africa, east Asia, and south and south-east Asia. The smallest gaps of six to seven hours a week were seen in Europe, 25 North America and Oceania.

Women are employed less than men across all regions of the world. Structural barriers such as access to affordable childcare, transport and family leave policies hinder women’s ability to enter and remain in employment, says the report.

30 In south and south-east Asia, the Middle East and north Africa about one in three women of working age is employed, compared with more than two-thirds of men. Other regions, including Europe and North America, have higher female employment rates, yet the gap is still significant.

Meanwhile, across all regions of the world, women consistently earn less than employed men. The gender pay gap is “an undeniable global phenomenon that persists in the present”, adds the report.

35 Aatif Somji, a senior research officer in gender equality and social inclusion at the thinktank ODI global, says the gender pay gap is “profoundly unfair” and that there has been “so little progress because unpaid care work still largely falls on women’s shoulders”.

He adds that although these “invisible tasks sustain society”, they are still coded as “women’s work”.

40 “This often makes it impossible for women to compete on an equal footing with men in the paid workforce, as they take up lower quality, lower-paying jobs of part-time work to balance their care responsibilities – or are kept out of better-paying jobs because of deep-rooted gender norms and stereotypes,” he says. (512 words)