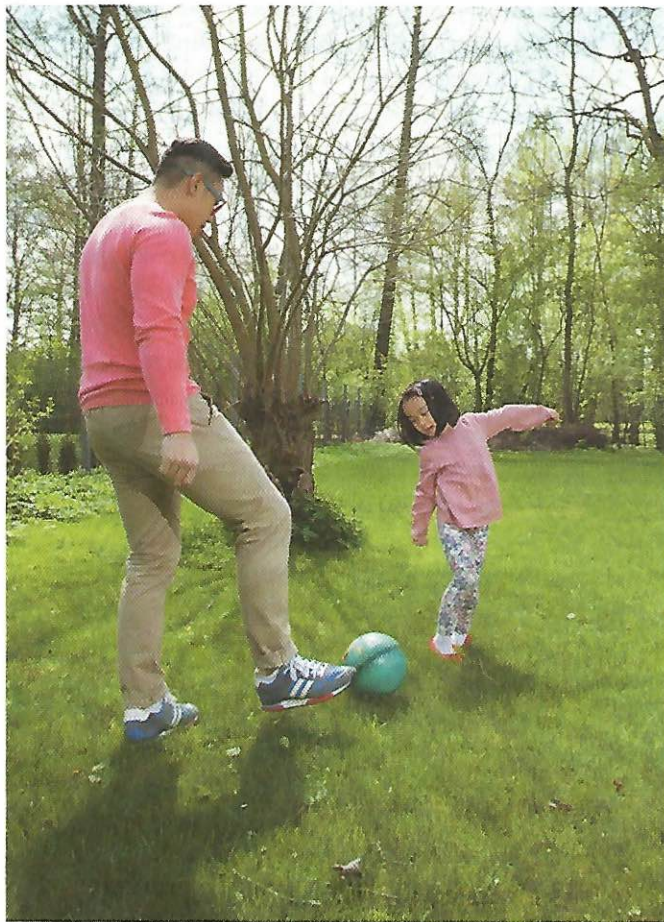


Some of these factors in the gender pay gap are also factors in why the pay gap is smaller than before. Women's employment has become more continuous, with more women staying employed when they have small children, so the average woman's years of job experience are now closer to those of the average man. Because salaries tend to increase with more years of experience, this convergence between men's and women's years of experience has reduced the pay gap. As more women than ever have chosen traditionally male, high-paying fields, such as law, medicine, and management, this has increased women's pay relative to men's. Also, enforcement of antidiscrimination law has reduced employer discrimination. All these factors have contributed to the reduction of the gender pay gap. But progress toward gender equality in employment, occupations, and pay has slowed down since the 1990s. Figure 12.6 shows this slowdown for pay equality. Interestingly, it was around the same time that attitudes about gender, which had become more egalitarian among both men and women in the 1970s and 1980s, moved in a more conservative direction (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2011).



Employed fathers spend more time caring for their children than they did 50 years ago, but so do employed mothers, and women's hours of paid work have increased much more than men's hours in household work. Why do men's roles seem to be more resistant to change than women's?

The Impact on Men

12.2.3: Discuss the impact of the gender revolution on men's roles.

The gender revolution has also impacted men's and boys' lives. Since the 1970s, married men began spending substantially more time with their children and doing a bit more housework. In this way their roles expanded to take on some traditionally female activities, parallel to the way more women moved into traditionally male activities. But what is striking is how asymmetric these changes were. Men moved much less into what had been women's arenas than vice versa. In fact, probably the larger change for boys and men was not taking on formerly female activities, but how all the movement of girls and women onto what had been their turf impacted them. Let's look at how these changes affected men's lives.

We saw that women's employment increased dramatically, especially from the 1960s to about 1990. As this happened, men's attitudes, like women's, became more accepting of female employment (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2011). But men didn't move in large numbers into being full-time homemakers; we saw in Figure 12.4 that 80 percent of all men are still employed. Indeed, norms of masculinity seem relatively unchanged in insisting that married men are supposed to have a job—so much so that when men aren't employed, couples more often divorce (Sayer et al. 2011). Even if norms had shifted to make men's employment more optional, it would have been impractical for most couples, as the wives entering employment typically didn't make as much money as their husbands, so families would have taken a reduction in pay if men quit their jobs.

Many advocates of work–family balance and gender equality have hoped that more couples could have each partner employed half the time while they share childrearing and household work relatively equally. But that is very difficult to do without financial sacrifice in the U.S. economy. In all countries in the European Union, the law requires that employers pay part-time workers the same amount per hour as full-time workers in the same job. But in the United States, employers do not have that constraint and part-time jobs typically pay substantially less per hour than the same job done a full 40 (or more) hours per week. Thus, few couples could move from one full-time earner to each partner working half-time without a loss in income. For all these reasons, the biggest change for men as a result of women's increased employment was not that more men started staying home or working part-time but that many of them got used to being part of a two-earner couple. The obvious benefit of this for men is that they share in the increased earnings that result. But it also means that women are