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DOCUMENT 1

UK gender gap continues to widen

The UK has slipped out of the top 20 countries for gender equality and the gap between men and women in the workplace has widened, according to a report that places Britain behind the Scandinavian countries and the Philippines. Research by the World Economic Forum (WEF) [...] found the UK has slipped from 18th to 26th in the rankings of its Global Gender Gap Report, part of a steady decline from the forum's inaugural league table in 2006, when the UK was ranked ninth. [...] While the UK failed to make the top 20 in any of the report's four categories – economy, education, health and politics – the drop in its overall rating this year was chiefly attributable to a significantly lower score in “economic participation,” which measures attributes such as the ratios of women in the workforce, wage equality for similar work done by men, and the number of women in senior roles.

[...] The WEF report is the latest in a line of studies and campaigns seeking to highlight gender inequality issues. Last week a global study of almost 6,000 MBA graduates by research group Catalyst found that the most highly qualified female business graduates lack the ambition of male counterparts in sectors such as engineering, manufacturing and natural resources. That finding appeared to be supported by comments from Moya Greene, chief executive of Royal Mail and one of only five female chief executives in the FTSE 100. In a speech last week, she said: “It's still disappointing when you see how young women view their ambition – and how others view that ambition.” [...] In 2011 the UK government launched a review of women on boards by Lord Davies, which set a target of having a minimum of 25% female representation on FTSE 100 boards by 2015. [...] The latest figures show that 61 members of the FTSE 100 have yet to reach 25%.

[...] Ruth Sealy, a lecturer and researcher in organisational psychology at City University London, said: “One of the approaches beginning to have an effect is this continual push for transparency in reporting. It is beginning to have an impact as it makes organisations a lot more aware about what's going on internally and a bit more embarrassed about it. We are not in the same place we were five years ago. The whole women on boards thing has had an impact. It is finally beginning to have an impact on chief executives.”

Adapted from Simon Goodley, *The Guardian*, 28 Oct 2014

DOCUMENT 2

If you're a man, is it better to have a male or female boss?

Gallup has been asking Americans whether they'd prefer a male or female boss since the early 1950s and, while the trends are in the direction of equality, overall, both sexes still say they'd prefer a man. What is perhaps most striking is that women plump for male bosses more strongly than men: in 2014, 39 per cent of women said they'd prefer a male boss, against only 26 per cent of men. Moreover, far more men say there's no difference. So, case closed, right? Even women say men are better bosses. Well, no. For starters women have centuries of male-dominated history counting against them. Even now, in the UK, only 35 per cent of managers are female. So, people are twice as likely to have had a male manager than a female manager – and the higher you go and the older you get, the more pronounced this bias gets. Thus, for many people this kind of preference may simply be a case of better the devil you know than the she-devil you don't.

[...] The trouble is, while generalisations about populations are interesting, they're well known to be a very poor guide to individuals. Besides, whatever you might prefer, you very rarely get to choose your boss anyway, so the best, if rather obvious, advice is to recognise your boss as an individual. "Rather than categorising according to stereotypes, the real world challenge is finding a way to work with the boss you have regardless of gender," says Emily Frohlich, client director of business psychologists Nicholson McBride. "You need to have the self-awareness to set aside your perceptions of differences and ask, 'What is this person in front of me like?'"

However, to end on a note of positive discrimination, if you are a man who works in a female dominated environment, you are unlikely to be held back: in fact, quite the reverse. Research suggests that, instead of hitting a glass ceiling, you will experience a "glass escalator" and advance more quickly.

Adapted from Rhymer Rigby, *The Telegraph*, 19 Feb 2015

DOCUMENT 3

At this rate, it'll take 100 years to get gender equality at work

Things are improving so slowly for women in corporate America that we aren't going to achieve gender equality at the top for another 100 years, according to a report released on Wednesday. It's not for the reasons you might think - i.e., it's not a "mommy issue." Both women and men reported feeling strained by the competing pulls of work and family, according to the survey of nearly 30,000 workers at 118 North American companies. The survey was conducted by McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org, a nonprofit focused on women's advancement founded by Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer at Facebook.

The big, ugly, hard-to-fix issue, the study suggests, is gender bias. That contradicts a lot of the conventional wisdom about why women don't make it to the so-called C-suite - the highest levels of a company where you find the jobs with "chief" in the title [...]. "Some of the biggest barriers are cultural and related to unconscious biases that impact company hiring, promotion, and development processes," said Dominic Barton, global managing director of McKinsey & Company [...]. A lot of people, for example, believe on some level that women are less competent than men. There's also something called a "maternal bias," in which mothers who do well at their job are disliked - and kept from advancing - because they're believed to be terrible parents.

Women hold 45 percent of entry-level jobs at the companies surveyed, and their ranks thin out as you go higher. Only 27 percent of vice presidents at those companies are women, as are 23 percent of senior vice presidents and 17 percent of C-suite execs. These figures are a very slight improvement from 2012 [...]. Very slight - that's where that 100-year estimate comes from.

So what's going on? First off, women aren't quitting their jobs or "opting out." In fact, the survey found that women, on average, quit their jobs at the same rates as men, or even less often. At the higher levels, women are more likely than men to stick around, the study found. The issue is that women aren't getting promoted at the same rate as men - and at every step along the corporate ladder, women say they are less interested in becoming a top executive.

The reasons why are telling. For single women, the main reason they said they didn't want to advance any higher at work was stress. And while women with children said the main reason they didn't want to advance was because of work and family pressures, stress came in at a very close second for that group. [...] For men with children, the difficulty of balancing work and family was also the top reason they weren't interested in holding a higher-ranking job - 62 percent of men with children said that, compared to 65 percent of women with children. And mothers were 15 percent more interested in becoming a top executive than the women surveyed who didn't have children.

"Historically, we thought women were less interested in promotions because of their concerns with family responsibilities," Rachel Thomas, the president and co-founder of LeanIn, told *The Huffington Post*. "This study points to a new reason: [...] women say stress and pressure is a top obstacle for them - all women, not just mothers." The stress, Thomas suggests, comes from the bigger hurdles women face at the office. For example, there's research showing that women are often believed to be less competent at their jobs than they really are, while men are often believed to be more competent than they are. Women have to prove themselves again and again.

There's also a Catch-22 involving personality: women who are seen as competent are less likely to be seen as likable, and women viewed as more likable are less likely to be seen as competent, research has shown. "We always say that women walk on a tightrope," Thomas said. "Men are not on that tightrope."

Adapted from Emily Peck, *The Huffington Post*, 30 Sept 2015

DOCUMENT 4

Gender equality: prospects for further transformation

In certain important ways men potentially have much to gain from deeper and more robust forms of gender equality in American life. In a world of real gender equality men would have a richer array of life choices around parenting and work. The dominant models of masculinity make it difficult for many men to play a full and active role in caregiving activities within the family. It is very difficult for men to interrupt their careers to take care of small children. The dominant models of masculinity also promote intense forms of competitiveness that make many men miserable, working excessively long hours, losing sight of more important things in their lives. Further advances towards gender equality will potentially involve a significant restructuring of the rules that govern the relationship between work and family, and this would give both men and women greater flexibility and balance in their lives.

The inequalities in the gender division of labor [...] have an impact far beyond simply the specific problem of free time available to men and women within families. It also deeply affects inequalities in the labor market and employment. The greater domestic burdens that, on average, married women have compared to married men act as a significant constraint on the kinds of jobs they can seek in the labor market. It also affects the attitudes of all employers towards prospective women employees. [...] If we are to move towards a more equal sharing of the time burdens of family life, this will have to occur through indirect means which change the incentives men and women have around these tasks and, perhaps, affect the balance of power of men and women within these domestic relations as they negotiate over domestic responsibilities. Three policies are particularly relevant here: pay equity; high quality publicly provided childcare services; egalitarian paid parental leave.

Adapted from E.O. Wright & J.Rogers, *American Society: How It Actually Works*, W.W. Norton, 2010