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THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN IN PORTUGAL
Haley Robinson

Introduction

The role that women play in Portugal’s society and economy is currently undergoing a major change. Portuguese marriage rates are steadily declining; the crude marriage rate, or number of marriages per 1,000 inhabitants, was 3.3 percent as of 2012, one of the lowest marriage rates in the European Union (EU) and nearly half of what it was in 2000 (Eurostat, “Marriage and Divorce Statistics”). Furthermore, the divorce rate was 2.4 percent as of 2012 (Eurostat, “Marriage and Divorce Statistics”), one of the highest in the EU. As of 2011, women accounted for 62.9 percent of single households, making women the majority among singles living alone (Instituto Nacional De Estadística). Overall, Portuguese women of the twenty-first century are beginning to live their lives more independently of men than they have in the past.

Although Portuguese women are making major advances toward becoming independent, there are obstacles preventing them from becoming fully equal to men within the labor market. Specifically, the large gender pay gap (GPG) that persists in Portugal prevents women from achieving full economic equality. Although economic inequality presents a number of dilemmas, it may also limit the economic growth that Portugal can achieve. Previous studies have shown that many countries have benefitted economically from female participation in the workforce. Considering the problems Portugal has been facing, pursuing full gender equality in the workplace has the potential to greatly benefit its economy.

\[1\] For example, the growing number of minority employees, including women, in the United States between 1960 and 2008 accounted for 17 percent to 20 percent of the country’s economic growth during that time period (OECD, p. 26). Additionally, in 2012 researchers projected that if countries involved with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development were to reach full gender equality by 2030, their GDP would increase by approximately 12 percent (OECD, p. 26).
In this article, I discuss existing gender inequality in the Portuguese workforce by presenting the existing data on the GPG and discrimination in the workplace. Next, I analyze what may have caused these inequalities, notably the influence of the Salazar regime, the Portuguese culture, and the lack of female involvement in politics. Finally, I offer suggestions on how Portugal may be able to alleviate this inequality. These include adding to the existing legislation on gender equality, educating women on negotiation skills, and increasing workplace flexibility.

The Education of Women

Unlike previous generations who mostly assumed domestic roles within their households, today more Portuguese women are pursuing tertiary, or university, educations and joining the previously male-dominated workforce. While in most other European countries men tend to have higher levels of education than women, this trend has been reversed in Portugal. In 2010 women surpassed men in graduation rates in higher secondary, or high school, education (Miguel do Carmo et al.) and accounted for the majority of university students (Canço and Santos, p. 17). In terms of university-level education, the percentage of women who have completed higher education has increased from a mere 3 percent in 1988 to 17 percent in 2008 (Carvalho), an increase of over 460 percent. Furthermore, as of 2008, 60.4 percent of students enrolled in universities were female (Canço and Santos, p. 17). These increases have been so large that for the first time in Portuguese history, a larger percentage of women have obtained university degrees than men.

Additionally, the number of women in traditionally male-dominated areas of study is also surprisingly high. Women accounted for 64.7 percent of graduates in social sciences, business studies, and law and 56.5 percent of graduates in sciences, mathematics, and informatics in 2010 (Canço and Santos, p. 18). Even in majors that had been traditionally male dominated (e.g., engineering), Portuguese women still accounted for 28.1 percent of graduates (Canço and Santos, p. 17), over 10 percentage points higher than in the U.S. (St. Rose). Portuguese women are more educated than Portuguese men on average and are gaining a strong foothold in traditionally male majors.

Women in the Workforce

Women are playing a more prominent role in the Portuguese labor force as well. Between 1988 and 2008, the percentage of female employees in the Portuguese workforce increased from 34.6 percent to 44.2 percent (Carvalho). Cross-culturally, Portuguese women fare better than women in other European countries as far as the female employment rate is concerned. Portugal’s low-educated women, having obtained no more than middle school education, have an employment rate of 57.6 percent (Tavora, p. 94). This is fairly high in comparison to Spain (41.3 percent), Italy (33.8 percent), and the EU-27 average (39.1 percent) (Tavora, p. 94). Similarly, Portugal’s overall female employment rate is at 61.9 percent, which is also higher than those of Spain (54.7 percent), Italy (47.9 percent), and the EU-27 average (58.3 percent) (Tavora, p. 94). Additionally, Portuguese women account for over 40 percent of all researchers in the science and technology fields, putting it above Spain, Italy, Norway, Ireland, and Finland in 2011 (Agência De Inovação, p. 1). Due to the increasing number of women in the workforce, in addition to their rising education levels, the number of women in the workforce with college degrees has now surpassed that of men. As of 2008, 16.7 percent of women in the workforce had a college degree compared with 11.8 percent of men (Carvalho). This represents a significant increase from 1988, when only 2.5 percent of female workers had university degrees compared with 3.7 percent of men (Carvalho).²

²There have also been large increases in the use of childcare services in Portugal. As of 2011, 35 percent of children between the ages of 0 and 3 years old were in childcare full-time, a 5 percentage-point increase over 2005 (European Union). As the ages of these children increased, the rates of childcare also went up; for example, during 2011, 81 percent of children between the ages of 3 and 6 benefited from full-time childcare, an increase of 6 percentage points since 2005, which is highly significant because an increase in the use of childcare provides additional evidence that women are stepping out of the domestic stereotypes to which they were originally held (European Union).
Inequality in the Workforce: Labor Market Discrimination

Despite these advancements by women in education and the workforce, many Portuguese women face various hurdles that make achieving economic equality with men difficult, namely labor market discrimination. Labor market discrimination, or treating workers differently due to characteristics unrelated to job performance, is problematic because it can influence the hiring, promoting, and pay practices of various institutions (Hyclak et al., p. 355). For the purpose of this article, I analyze labor market discrimination against women by looking at the GPG in certain fields. The GPG is defined as the overall difference in earnings between men and women determined as a percentage relative to an average man’s earnings. I use GPG values that do not adjust for individual characteristics because they give an overall depiction of gender earning differences.

As of 2012 Portugal’s unadjusted GPG was about 15 percent (Eurostat, Gender Pay Gap in Unadjusted Form [Data file]). At the aggregate level, this pay gap is not as high as those seen in many other countries. In the United States, for example, the GPG was 22 percent in 2013. As shown in Figure 1, Portugal’s GPG is slightly below the EU’s median GPG of 16.5 percent (Eurostat, Gender Pay Gap in Unadjusted Form [Data file]).

Comparing Portugal’s overall GPG to that in other countries, however, is misleading. Despite the overall Portuguese GPG being below average, the more educated Portuguese workers are, the larger this pay gap is. For example, in 2008, men who had completed higher education obtained 32 percent higher earnings than women with the same education. Surprisingly, this gap has increased by 5 percentage points since 1988 (Carvalho). This makes the GPG among Portuguese workers who have completed higher education nearly twice that of the EU average. In contrast, in 2014, the U.S. GPG for workers who obtained higher education is 23 percent, making it only 1 percentage point higher than the national average (Corbett).3

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3While some may argue that the Portuguese pay gap is due to Portuguese women being overqualified for their jobs, this is not the case. Research by Mendes in 1988 has shown that to advance in their careers women need higher educational credentials than do men (Amâncio, p. 186).
Many argue that the GPG is a result of women exiting the workforce to have children, which then causes them to have less experience than men when they later reenter the workforce. This lack of experience causes them to earn lower pay. Therefore, to show that the GPG is an adequate way to measure labor market discrimination, one must look at the GPG of young individuals entering the workforce, prior to having children. Unfortunately, Portugal also does not fare well in terms of its GPG when age is taken into account. Even the youngest female age group earns significantly less than men in comparison to other countries. According to the unadjusted GPG in 2012, Portuguese women under the age of 25 earn, on average, 9.1 percent less than men, which puts the average GPG of this generation significantly above many other European countries, including Spain (6.1 percent), Italy (6.6 percent), France (−6.7 percent),4 the United Kingdom (5.7 percent), and Ireland (1.6 percent) (Eurostat, Gender Pay Gap in Unadjusted Form By Age [Data file]). Furthermore, as seen in Figure 3, Portugal’s GPG has been steadily increasing over time, unlike the relatively constant EU-27 average.

Some argue that the use of the overall unadjusted GPG may be misleading because it does not take into account additional nondiscriminatory factors (such as education, work experience, and job segregation5) that may contribute to this gap. If women were to have significantly less work experience, for example, the current GPG statistics may merely reflect the natural pay differences that occur when individuals are less experienced in their field rather than discrimination itself. Similarly, women gravitating toward lower-paying jobs by choice could also be largely affecting the current GPG statistics. In order to show that the GPG is truly a reflection of labor market discrimination, one must control for all of these factors. While it is extremely difficult to control for these factors, it can be confirmed that education levels are not a major factor for the GPG, because, as discussed previously, Portuguese women are remaining in school longer.

4In France, women under the age of 25 actually earn more than men.

5Job segregation refers to the tendency for men and women to gravitate toward different types of jobs.
and pursuing university educations more often than men. In order to further gauge the reliability of the GPG statistics, a GPG analysis of individual sectors of the Portuguese economy can be helpful.

As Figure 4 shows, even when economic sectors are taken into account, the pay gap still exists in most Portuguese occupations. The pay gap persists both in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as business economy, and traditionally female fields, such as human health and social work, providing evidence that the GPG statistics (listed previously) reflect job discrimination rather than occupational segregation.

Salazar’s Legacy

Although Portuguese women have made great strides in attaining more education and becoming more involved in the workforce, it is clear that there continues to be gender inequality. Contributing toward this inequality have been some of the ideals established during the previous century. As in many other countries, the feminist movement arose in Portugal during the early twentieth century. Organizations, such as the Portuguese Feminist Studies Group, the Republican League of Portuguese Women, and the National Council of Portuguese Women, fueled the feminist movement as they gained recognition. All these advances were trumped, however, with the commencement of the António de Oliveira Salazar regime in 1926 (Cova and Pinto, p. 134). Salazar’s “Estado Novo” (“New State”) was a right-wing dictatorship that, similar to that in Italy, limited women’s rights. Unlike Mussolini, however, Salazar was less brash in his denouncement of the flourishing feminist movement, even referred to as “elegantly anti-feminist” by António Ferro, the director of the National Secretary of Propaganda (Chokova, p. 40). Rather than banning the established women’s rights movements outright, he created an atmosphere in Portugal that was hostile toward women’s social and civil rights and that would temperately justify his sexist decisions. For example, during an interview with Ferro in 1932, Salazar claimed

... a married woman, as a married man, is a pillar of family, an indispensable basis for moral reconstruction. Inside the home, the woman is not a slave. She must be cherished, loved and respected
for her role as a mother, and as an educator of their children. She is not inferior to man. In countries or in places where the married woman competes with the man’s work – in factories, workshops, offices, or in the humanities – the institution of the family, which we establish as the rock of a well-organized society, is at risk of destruction. Therefore, we should allow man to struggle with external life, on the street... and allow the woman to defend life, bringing it in her arms, bringing it inside the home. I do not know, after all, which of the two will have the most beautiful, highest and useful role (Chokova, p. 40).

During this interview, Salazar made his anti-feminist agenda appear less extreme by claiming that women’s role in society was equally important to that of men but that it should not interfere with traditionally male jobs.

Salazar opted for a gentler approach in which his government glorified the domestication of women. Throughout his time in power, Salazar emphasized the importance of “family building” to Portuguese society. He claimed close-knit, well-structured families were the key to Portuguese success and that it was the woman’s role to ensure that they happened. Much of what Salazar saw as progress was, indeed, steps in the opposite direction for the women’s rights movement. An example of this is Salazar’s introduction of the 1933 Constitution (Chokova). The Constitution stated that all Portuguese citizens were equal before the law; however, it cited exceptions based on gender. Specifically, it describes them as “the differences resulting from the female nature and the interest of the family” (Chokova, p. 30). Salazar also embraced the Catholic Church’s ideals at the time, including its radically conservative views on the role of women. Salazar appropriated its Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno encyclicals, both of which emphasized that women must stay home to raise children and complete housework (Chokova, pp. 31–32). These ideals played a major role in Salazar’s publication of the “Economia

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6 In 1931, Salazar limited women’s right to vote such that they were only allowed to vote if they were over the age of 21 and either widowed, divorced, or married to a husband who was overseas or had a secondary or university education (Cova and Pinto). These laws further enforced the Salazarian ideal that only the head of the household, which was by default the man, had control over jurisdictions outside of the household.
Doméstica” (“Domestic Economy”) in 1945. In this document, he sought to convince women that they were valuable to the Portuguese state, just like men (Chokova, p. 33). He drew parallels between managing a home and governing a state. His statement glorified women, but only for their domestic roles, and emphasized the differences between the male and female genders. Rather than preaching equality, these statements separated the genders further by pronouncing that men and women have different roles to play in society.

Discrimination Today: A Cultural Analysis

Salazar’s legacy led to many of the inequalities seen today between men and women in Portugal. Because of the oppression that women faced during nearly the entire twentieth century, women continue to face discrimination in the workforce. This discrimination is another major factor that contributes to the pay inequality. What is particularly harmful, however, is that many Portuguese men and women alike do not easily recognize this discrimination. This is problematic because individuals must be able to correctly identify acts of discrimination when evoking change and promoting gender equality. Many of the gender stereotypes that were fostered by Salazar’s dictatorship and continue to exist conflict with the ideals set forth by the global effort toward gender equality. Despite the evidence that Portugal is advancing toward the equality of men and women, Salazar’s concept of the “Doméstica” continues to be deeply engrained in Portuguese culture and conflicts with these findings. While many Portuguese are starting to accept the changing role of women, some still hold the opinion that staying within the domestic role is the optimal position for a woman.

These opinions make it difficult for women to be taken seriously in the workforce and to advance in their careers. Furthermore, because these opinions are so deeply engrained, many managers do not even see their discriminatory practices as promoting gender inequality. A study conducted in 1999 by Heloísa Perista (referred to in Almeida and Cristovam, p. 7) showed that most Portuguese company managers believe that the salary differences between their male and female workers are based solely on the quality of their work. The managers additionally claim that there are inherent differences in work quality due to men having higher academic qualifications and producing a better quality of work. Finally, managers state that these differences lead to “normal differences” in pay. These beliefs are problematic not only because they are used to justify these wage gaps but also because these discriminatory beliefs are based on incorrect information. As discussed previously, women in Portugal are now more educated than men.

Similarly, many female employees themselves also do not see sexist actions taking place in the workforce as discriminatory. In a 2009 study, Nogueira (p. 79) emphasizes how many female employees give examples of being discriminated against in the workforce but refuse to openly admit to them as acts of discrimination. Despite the fact that many of the female participants have experienced having to work harder to be taken seriously, a majority of these employees refused to admit that they were discriminated against. This is problematic, considering that in order to improve the workforce environment, women must be able to identify the acts of discrimination and feel comfortable

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7 For example, according to a randomly sampled survey conducted in 2002 as a part of the International Social Survey Program, 93.3 percent of Portuguese individuals agreed with the statement that “[b]oth the man and woman should contribute to the household income” (Santos and Pereira). Similarly, 86.2 percent agreed that “[m]en ought to do a larger share of child care than they do now” and 85.3 percent agreed that “[m]en ought to do a larger share of household work than they do now” (Santos and Pereira). Finally, 75.4 percent agreed that “[h]aving a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person” (Santos and Pereira).

8 For example, in a randomly sampled survey conducted in 2002 as a part of the International Social Survey Program, 78.4 percent agreed that “a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works” and 60.8 percent agreed that “[a] job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children” (Santos and Pereira).

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9 For example, as one of the study’s participants claimed, “I have never felt discriminated [against], although… I should mention again that in order to not be discriminated in my career, I have to be more abiding and zealous than many men.” Similarly, another participant said, “In fact, I haven’t been [discriminated against].… Of course, it is obvious I have had to work harder than many of [my male coworkers]” (Nogueira, p. 79).
with coming forward about them. Also, many of the female interviewees in the Nogueira study emphasized their being feminine, much like Salazar emphasized the importance of femininity. Participants made claims such as, “I place a great importance on femininity” and “the feminine sensitivity…is very important!” (Nogueira, pp. 81–82). While it may preserve women’s self-esteem, emphasizing the femininity of female workers denies that asymmetry of power in the workforce exists. Moreover, doing this preserves the social norm that men play the dominant role in the workforce.

In general, women in the Portuguese workforce are applauded for being women rather than for the jobs that they are doing. Currently, more than 70 percent of working women are mothers (Nogueira, p. 73). A study completed by the National Institute for Statistics in 1999 concluded that, on average, women worked an average of two extra hours a day on domestic and professional activities in addition to their paid jobs. Furthermore, this housework is hardly shared by men: 50 percent of men never prepared meals, 71.5 percent never cleaned the house, and 83.4 percent never did laundry (Nogueira, p. 73). Because of this, a dichotomy has emerged in the way that the Portuguese view women in the workforce. The general public opinion has become that women in leadership positions are either effectively “men” or “super-women” (Nogueira, p. 75). While viewing female coworkers as “men” is insensitive to the differences and hardships that women may face, it is also destructive to view them as “super-women.” Referring to the minority of female leaders in the workforce as “special women” can be used as an alibi to make society appear egalitarian while effectively masking the underlying problems of gender discrimination.

Female Involvement in Politics

The small number of women in leadership positions in Portugal makes overcoming these stereotypes particularly challenging. Portuguese women constitute only 7.4 percent of board members of the country’s largest companies and none of the companies’ board chairs or CEOs (European Commission, p. 1). With a lack of women involved at the top of companies, the discriminatory workplace culture surrounding women is not surprising. Furthermore, the absence of women involved in politics may be making it particularly difficult for changes to occur. It was not until 1974 when women were given access to all positions in government (Nogueira, p. 72). Despite the fact that women currently have the legal right to hold government positions, a woman has never been elected as president of the republic or of a regional government (Nogueira, p. 74). Additionally, while there have been ten male prime ministers of Portugal since 1974, there has only been one female prime minister (Nogueira, p. 74). Furthermore, women accounted for only 11 percent of government officials in 2005 (Nogueira, p. 74). According to a study completed in 2001, if the rate of increase of women in political positions continues at the rate it has since 1974, full political equality will not be reached until 2185 (Nogueira, p. 75). This figure, shocking as it is, may be underestimating the length of time it may take to reach political equality considering that the percentage of female involvement faced a sharp decline in 2011. Although women accounted for 29 percent of decision-making positions in national government in 2009 and 2010, this figure dropped to 17 percent in 2011 and remained at that level in 2012 (Santos and Pereira, p. 7).

Existing Gender Equality Laws

Despite the lack of female representation in government, there are several laws and organizations in place whose goals are to promote gender equality. After the Salazarian dictatorship, a new constitution was created that gave power to the women’s rights movement. In Article 59 of the Constitution of 1976, the section on workers’ rights states that

Regardless of age, sex, race, citizenship, place of origin, religion, and political and ideological convictions, every worker shall possess the right… to the remuneration of his work in accordance with its volume, nature, and quality with respect for the principle of equal pay for equal work (Constitution of the Portuguese Republic).

10In the United States, 18.5 percent of the members of Congress are female (National Women’s Political Caucus).
Similarly, in October 1997 Law 105/97 came into existence. This law specifically gave the right to equal treatment and employment at work to women.

Since then, there have been additional laws and amendments passed. For example, in May 2001 the Portuguese government passed Law 9/2001. This law mandated punishment for not following the legislation related to gender equality and gave power to the Inspectorate General of Labor (IGT) and the Commission for Equality in Labor and Employment (CITE). The IGT prevents, detects, and punishes all discriminatory actions in the workplace. The CITE, on the other hand, combats discrimination and promotes equal work opportunity for men and women by both recommending laws to the government and promoting the study of gender inequality. Furthermore, the CITE also requires the government to send Parliament an annual assessment of equal opportunities for men and women, including progress in equal employment and training practices. This allows Parliament to assess the current workplace environment so that it can create additional laws for Portugal to progress toward gender equality (Almeida and Cristovam, pp. 1–8).

In order to directly address the lack of female representation in government, the Parity Act was passed in 2006. This act mandated that 33 percent of the candidates on any Parliament ballots must be female (Baum and Espírito-Santo, p. 324). Additionally, the order of candidate names on those ballots must alternate between male and female (Monteiro). Public opinion toward this equality-promoting act, however, is mixed. Although 67 percent of Portuguese men and 79.6 percent of Portuguese women agree that policies should be put in place to increase female representation in politics, 55.6 percent of men and 53.4 percent of women believe that quota laws are unnecessary and that women should be elected solely on merit (Baum and Espírito-Santo, p. 332). In light of the mixed opinions concerning this act, it is not surprising that it has been difficult to enforce. Just three years after the Parity Act had been implemented, all of Portugal’s political parties had breached this law to some extent during the 2009 elections (Monteiro). They decided that they were willing to accept the penalties for not adhering to the law instead of having the “correct” number of women on their ballots.

Possible Solutions? The Potential for New Initiatives

Despite Portugal’s having many laws to prevent gender discriminatory practices, the persistent GPG and public opinion both indicate that the legislation has not been effective. In providing suggestions for future initiatives, it may be useful to examine the laws and policies used by other countries that are considered to have high gender equality ratings in various domains. The 2014 Global Gender Gap Report (Hausmann et al., p. 8) ranks all countries according to their overall gender equality. This overall ranking is then divided into several subcategories, including economic participation and opportunity, political empowerment, health and survival, and educational attainment. According to this report, Iceland is ranked number one in the world overall and has been for four consecutive years whereas Portugal ranked 39th. Within the “economic participation and opportunity” category, Iceland ranks seventh while Portugal ranks 44th. Within the “political empowerment” category, Iceland ranks first whereas Portugal ranks 44th. Finally, along the lines of educational attainment, Iceland tied for first place with 25 other countries while Portugal ranked 68th (Hausmann et al., p. 8).

\[11\] Rankings within this subcategory are determined by female participation in the workforce in comparison to that of men; wage inequality for similar work; female income in comparison to that of men; the number of female legislators, senior officials, and managers in comparison to that of men; and the number of female professionals and technical workers in comparison to that of men (Hausmann et al., pp. 5–6).

\[12\] Rankings within this subcategory are determined by the number of women in Parliament in comparison to men, the number of women in ministry in comparison to men, and the number of years there has been a female head of state in comparison to men (Hausmann et al., pp. 5–6).

\[13\] Rankings within this subcategory are calculated by the literacy rate among women in comparison to men and the female enrollment rates in primary, secondary, and tertiary education in comparison to men (Hausmann et al., pp. 5–6).
Iceland has made a number of changes to its legislation since 2008 that have led it to be considered one of the world’s most gender-inclusive countries. In 2008, for example, the Icelandic government passed an amendment to its gender equality laws requiring that all councils, boards, and government committees of three or more people have at least 40 percent of members be of each gender. Similarly, in 2010 the Icelandic government passed another amendment that required that the same percentages be applied to the boards of both private and public companies (Iceland Centre for Gender Equality, p. 7). If Portugal were to adopt similar laws, it might be able to address some of the issues (discussed previously) that were caused by the lack of female representation in the government and on boards. Additionally, Iceland enacted a Plan of Action on Gender Equality in 2011, in which the government aimed to initiate “gender mainstreaming,” or making gender equality a main priority, through its project entitled “Side by Side” (Iceland Centre for Gender Equality, p. 11).14 Adopting similar action plans in Portugal might help change the negative workplace environment created by managers unknowingly committing acts of gender discrimination in the workplace (discussed previously).

In addition to adopting policies similar to those of Iceland, the Portuguese government might create educational programs that promote gender equality. Studies have shown that women themselves may actually be part of the gender wage-gap problem. According to a study carried out by David Card and colleagues, 10 to 15 percent of the GPG in Portugal may be due to women’s inability to negotiate effectively in the workplace (Card et al, p. 32). It may be the case that Portuguese women, and women in most countries, do not have the bargaining skills necessary to obtain equal pay. Although Portuguese men may feel comfortable asking for a raise or better work hours, women may feel unable to do so. With this in mind, it may be desirable to educate women on how to better negotiate their pay and work hours in the workplace. To do this, educational programs might be created to teach these negotiation skills to students before they join the workforce. Teaching these negotiation skills may also be beneficial in ensuring that laws for gender equality are properly enforced. Activists argue that many of the laws enforcing gender equality fail because women within the political system are hesitant to defend these laws (Monteiro).

Although laws, such as those discussed previously, could make a difference, government intervention alone cannot close the gender wage gap. As of 2012 the GPG in the Portuguese private sector is more than twice as large as that of the public sector (Eurostat, Gender Pay Gap in Unadjusted Form by Economic Control [Data file]). Many economists argue that it may be the structure of the workforce, and primarily the lack of work-time flexibility, that prevents the GPG from closing. Studies have shown that the GPG for full-time American workers is significantly smaller when individuals first graduate from college. As women age, however, this pay gap increases (Goldin, p. 1,094). As demonstrated in Figure 5, this pattern holds true in Portugal as well.

Goldin claims that this phenomenon occurs because of women having children. For example, among American individuals with MBAs, women with children tend to work 24 percent fewer hours per week than men or than women without children (Goldin, p. 1,111). This phenomenon is also likely to occur in Portugal because there is substantial pressure for women to be the primary caregivers in their families. In order for women to be capable of working more hours, Goldin claims that the workplace should offer more work-hour flexibility by adjusting the total number of hours women spend working, having women on call, women having face time with clients, and other related activities (Goldin, p. 1,094). She strengthens this claim by pointing out that work sectors that lack in work-time flexibility, such as business and law, have a much larger GPG than sectors with more flexible work hours, such as technology and pharmacy.

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14This project provides gender-equality training to top and middle managers in ministries. The Plan of Action also addresses “gender responsive budgeting,” or planning budgets that contribute to gender equality, by creating a working group appointed by the Minister of Finance to address this issue. Furthermore, this action plan created a working group appointed by the Minister of Welfare whose sole job is to propose initiatives on how to increase male involvement in the gender equality initiative.
These sectors with inflexible work hours disproportionately reward individuals who work longer hours, allowing workers who are not primary caretakers of children to earn significantly more. This then widens the GPG within these sectors (Goldin, p. 1106). Flexible work environments, on the other hand, make it easy to customize a schedule such that women with children are able to mold their work schedules to meet their personal needs without facing paycheck penalties. With this in mind, Portugal might try to increase workplace flexibility, especially in the private sector, in addition to enacting legal reforms. Although not all jobs can be made flexible in this regard, the increase in the use of technology can often allow for more accommodating working hours.

**Conclusion**

Despite the advances in education and the push for independence on the part of women in Portugal, today’s Portuguese women continue to face inequality in the workplace. Surprisingly, the gender wage gap increases with education such that the more educated a woman is, the lower her earnings are compared with a man with that same education. Furthermore, GPGs continue to exist within different sectors, which shows that this phenomenon is not simply a result of job-market segregation. Rather, inequality in pay is the result of a number of factors, such as the Salazarian dictatorship, the Portuguese workplace culture, the absence of women in politics, and the lack of enforcement of many of the existing laws.

To close the gender wage gap in Portugal, the government, the private sector, and the education sector might consider taking several steps to accomplish this goal. First, the Portuguese government could adopt its own versions of the laws found in highly gender-equal societies, such as Iceland. Second, the education system could teach students the art of negotiation and bargaining, so that women could feel more comfortable with negotiating pay and work hours in the workplace. Finally, the private sector could consider increasing workplace flexibility so that women with children are able to more easily coordinate jobs and domestic responsibilities. Taking these suggestions into consideration could enable Portugal to come closer to achieving full gender equality.