

Women here earn 6% less than men, but gap is shrinking

MOM says key reason for pay gap is that men still dominate higher-paying jobs

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Even though they may be doing the same job in the same industry at the same age and education level, women are still earning less than men.

This adjusted gender pay gap was 6 per cent – or \$342 – in 2018, according to a new study by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and National University of Singapore economist Jessica Pan.

At a press conference yesterday, MOM revealed that the gap has narrowed from 8.8 per cent in 2002 and is lower than the latest available figures from countries such as the US (8 per cent), Canada (7.7 per cent to 8.3 per cent) and China (18.3 per cent).

The year 2002 was chosen for analysis as it has the earliest comparable data available.

Overall, before removing the effects of factors such as occupation and age, the median monthly salary of a woman in full-time work was 16.3 per cent less than a man in full-time work, a slight rise from 16 per cent in 2002.

The data was collected from Singaporeans and permanent residents aged 25 to 54 in the Comprehensive Labour Force Survey of about 33,000 households.

The researchers used a statistical model to calculate the share of the gap that is due to various factors, namely human capital factors like age and education, and labour market factors like occupation, industry and working hours.

Removing the effect of these factors results in the adjusted pay gap.

MOM said a key factor in the pay gap was that occupational segregation remained an issue, as higher-paying jobs still tend to be dominated by men.

Occupational segregation is the distribution of workers across and within occupations, based upon demographic charac-

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teristics, most often gender.

The ministry said this is despite the fact that the employment rate among women has grown over the past decade, and more women are now in PMET occupations.

Sociologists told *The New Paper* that while perfect parity is the aim, work towards completely equal pay requires time.

Associate Professor Lawrence Loh of National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School said: “While it is good that the adjusted pay gap is lower than the almost 9 per cent previously, 6 per cent is not satisfactory as an outcome.”

GENDER ROLES

He said that while a bulk of the work will have to be from workplaces and industries, particularly in helping to reduce tension between career progression and family building, society also needs to shift its expectations of gender roles and caregiving duties.

NUS sociologist Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser added that ensuring the education and skills profile of women are on par with that of men and a possible up-valuation of jobs that are female-dominated, such as teaching, nursing, care services, can also help address the occupational segregation in Singapore.

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