

Dismantling Restrictive Gender Norms: Can Better Designed Paternal Leave Policies Help?

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Despite global commitments and efforts, women's equality, particularly at work, has still not been fully realized. Here, we examine whether improved parental leave policies, implemented at the national level, that encourage fathers to participate in caregiving can be effective at reducing unequal gender norms surrounding work. We use data from 1995–2018 that are nationally representative for nine countries, and employ a difference-in-differences approach to estimate the effect that changing parental leave policies has on attitudes towards women's work. Our results indicate that changes to parental leave policy that incentivize or encourage fathers to take time off are associated with improvements in attitudes towards women's equality in the workplace. Specifically, we find that incentives for paternal leave stimulates egalitarian changes in attitudes among both men and women. Our study is the first to longitudinally investigate whether parental leave policies can influence gender equitable norms and our findings support the notion that egalitarian changes in policy can improve gender norms.

Introduction

In 1979, the United Nations (U.N.) adopted the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a landmark global treaty that binds state parties to protect the equal rights of women and girls. Beyond addressing gender equality in education, healthcare, and political life, CEDAW established thorough commitments to women's equal rights in all

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aspects of work, including employment opportunities, pay, and working conditions. Moreover, the treaty urged countries to work toward eliminating practices based on “stereotyped roles for men and women,” and to adopt measures recognizing “the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children” (United Nation, 1979).

Forty years later, nearly all the world’s countries—187 of the 193 U.N. member states—have ratified CEDAW, committing to be legally bound by its principles and to submit periodic reports about their compliance. Over the intervening decades, women’s labor force participation has indeed risen, and in many countries the gender wage gap has begun to narrow (World Bank, 2012). At the same time, significant gaps remain. As of 2018, women’s labor force participation rate globally was 49%, compared to 75% for men (International Labour Organization, 2018). Women remain overrepresented in low-wage and informal work (Bruning & Plantenga, 1999; Moss & Deven, 1999). According to the World Economic Forum, at the current rate of progress, it will take over 250 years to reach gender parity in “economic participation and opportunity,” a composite measure factoring in wages, labor force participation, and representation in professional, managerial, legislative, and technical positions (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Research has shown that the introduction of policies that support women to remain in the workforce after having children, such as paid maternal leave, has contributed to better employment outcomes for women (Nandi et al., 2018). Conversely, the absence of such policies is impeding further progress. For example, between 1990 and 2010, the rate of female labor force participation in the United States fell from sixth highest among 22 OECD countries to 17th; according to a study by economists Francine Blau and Lawrence Khan, the United States’ lack of “family friendly” policies, including paid parental leave, accounts for 29% of its drop in the rankings (Blau & Kahn, 2013). More broadly, the considerable variation in rates of maternal employment across high-income countries suggests that governmental policies are influencing women’s decisions to enter or remain in the workforce (Gornick, Meyers, & Ross, 1998; Morgan & Zippel, 2003).

Yet although the global expansion of maternity leave and the income and the support for work it can provide have had major impacts, shifting norms around gender and work will require more than enabling women to continue working after becoming mothers. Indeed, time use studies have shown that women in the workforce continue to shoulder the majority of unpaid household labor, and that this “double burden” undermines their success at work, including by increasing absenteeism (Ferrant, Pesando, & Nowacka, 2014; Nilsen, Skipstein, Ostby, & Mykletun, 2017; OECD, 2020). Moreover, when women alone take leave for caregiving, employers are more likely to discriminate against female employees based on their presumptions about women’s current or future family responsibilities (Becker, Fernandes, & Weichselbaumer, 2019; Kelly, 2005). Ensuring that both women and men have the support to equally participate in home and at work,

including by providing job-protected leave to both parents, is one critical step toward dismantling the gendered expectations about caregiving that contribute to employment discrimination and limit women's employment opportunities and advancement.

However, whether paid leave policies can influence workplace gender norms may depend on the details of their design, and in particular the extent to which they support greater take-up of leave by men. Within a social context of restrictive gender norms, simply making leave available to men may be insufficient to shift gendered expectations about leave-taking within the workplace, or the employment discrimination that these assumptions often inform (Moss & Deven, 1999). Further, even when fathers do take leave, the duration of their leave compared to that of the mother can influence both employment outcomes and norms. Disparities in take-up may have negative consequences for a woman's reentry to the labor force once the leave passes a certain duration. Though well-paid maternity and parental leave that is moderately long has been associated with increased labor force participation of mothers, very long periods of leave (often durations extending 1 year and beyond) contribute to gendered expectations about caregiving and are associated with greater occupational inequality among men and women (Blau & Kahn, 2013; Boeckmann, Misra, & Budig, 2014).

Parental leave policies vary in structure as well as duration. Parental leave that is organized along family lines reserves a specific period of leave for the family as a whole and enables one or both parents to make use of these entitlements. Parental leave that is organized along individual and nontransferable lines reserves a specific period of leave for each parent. Individual entitlements have been linked to an increased uptake of leave by fathers, making it less likely that the mother alone will take leave (Lappegård, 2012). Organizing parental leave along individual lines, also known as a "use-it-or-lose-it" system, is just one way in which countries can incentive fathers to make use of the parental leave that is available to them. One study examining parental leave take-up patterns in eight European countries found that the share of men utilizing parental leave benefits was less than 5% for countries that organized their leave along family lines, compared to rates as high as 43% in countries with individual leave policy structures (Bruning & Plantenga, 1999); in other words, men were more likely to take leave when it was specifically allocated to them. Other ways include an increase in the total amount of parental leave available if the father takes leave up to a certain threshold as well as increased financial incentives for families in which both parents make use of leave entitlements. In Germany, a 2007 reform providing a 2-month "bonus" if both parents take at least 2 months of the 12-month shared leave period led to sharp increase in men's leave-taking in the following years; 8.8% of children born in Germany in 2007 had fathers who took leave, rising to 17% in 2008 (Reich, 2011). Descriptive statistics from countries including

Finland and Portugal suggest that their incentives for men to take leave have been similarly effective (Blum, Koslowski, & Moss, 2017).

There are several possible mechanisms through which men's greater take-up of leave may lead to improved attitudes toward women's work status. The first is that men who take leave are often more involved in childcare and housework than fathers who do not (Bünning, 2015; Haas & Hwang, 2008; Nepomnyaschy & Waldfogel, 2007; Tamm, 2019; Tanaka & Waldfogel, 2007). For example, a study from Sweden, where each parent is granted 2 months of nontransferable paid leave, found that the amount of parental leave taken by fathers was positively associated with a more equal division of labor for childcare and fathers' satisfaction with the amount of contact they had with their children (Haas & Hwang, 2008). Interestingly, just taking leave without regard to the duration was not meaningfully associated with any of these outcomes, suggesting that the amount of time fathers spend at home with their children more strongly influences a departure from traditional gendered expectations (Haas & Hwang, 2008). Second, increased paternal involvement during early childhood creates a shift from the traditional division of labor and encourages fathers to take on a dual-earner, dual-carer mindset (Bünning, 2015). In turn, fathers may value paid and unpaid work in new ways. Improved parental leave policies may create a more supportive cultural context for men's involvement in caregiving in and of itself (Haas, Allard, & Hwang, 2002). As more men stay at home providing care, more women return to work and resume the role of breadwinner, countering traditional gendered expectations and thereby contributing to a shift away from restrictive norms that encourage discriminatory practices toward working mothers. Equally, in countries where men take up a higher proportion of parental leave entitlements or have greater involvement in child-rearing, we also find increased re-entry rates for women to their former jobs (Bröckel, 2016; Bruning & Plantenga, 1999). Finally, improved parental leave policies may be one component of a large group of egalitarian legislative changes that aim to increase gender equality by reducing the employment barriers and discrimination that women often face in the workplace (Sullivan, Coltrane, McAnnally, & Altintas, 2009).

However, studies of changing leave taking and childcare roles exist in few countries and do not examine changes in individual gender norms or attitudes. Whether parental leave policy structures can impact attitudes toward gender equality remains unclear. To date, no studies have been designed to examine whether parental leave policies influence societal attitudes toward gender equality, and specifically, women's rights to equal employment opportunities. In this study, we begin to fill that gap by evaluating whether leave policies structured to encourage higher take-up by men contribute to more equal gender norms. Specifically, our study examines whether attitudes regarding women's roles in the workplace improve more in countries with egalitarian changes in parental leave policies (defined as the provision of incentives for fathers to take parental leave or 2 weeks or

more of paid paternity leave) than countries that offer transferable parental leave only.

Methods

We examined whether national changes in paternity leave legislation resulted in greater, gender-equitable, changes in attitudes regarding women's working status compared to countries that had unchanging parental leave policies. Thus, the five treatment countries included in our study all experienced a national policy change that either incentivized fathers to take parental leave or that newly provided paid paternity leave of at least 2 weeks; these countries were Estonia (2002), Germany (2007), Italy (2000), Slovenia (2003), and the United Kingdom (2003). Any country that had parental leave policies in place but provided no incentives and had no paid paternity leave throughout the study period was included as a control country; these countries were Belarus, Moldova, Russian Federation, and Ukraine.

Data

Longitudinal data on parental leave policy were extracted from WORLD Policy Analysis Center and MACHEquity databases (WORLD Policy Analysis Center & MACHEquity, 2015). These data sources contain national parental and paternity leave laws for all 193 U.N. member states from the period 1995–2018, and code policy based on a collection of primary-source legislation, U.N. reports, and country-specific reports sent to international bodies and monitoring committees. For countries with World Values Survey (WVS) surveys before 1995, we independently searched for legislation that confirmed their parental and paternity leave policies had been the same. For each country, data were available on the type of leave policy (paid vs. unpaid), the number of weeks allotted, the maximum wage replacement rate, and whether fathers were incentivized to take advantage of the parental leave policy.

Questions on attitudes regarding women's work status were collected from the WVS (Inglehart et al., 2014). The WVS is a collection of representative, cross-national, time-series data obtained from almost 100 countries, representing nearly 90% of the global population. A common survey is administered and respondents are asked, in their local language, questions regarding their human beliefs, values, and motivations. The minimum number of completed interviews for most countries is 1,200 and individuals are selected through either a full probability or a combination of probability and stratified sampling methods.

All countries included in our study had to have at least two available WVS surveys administered between 1990 and 2016. Country survey years are as follows for treatment countries: Estonia (1990, 1996, 1999, 2008, and 2011),

Germany (1990, 1997, 1999, 2006, 2008, and 2013), Italy (1990, 1999, 2005, and 2009), Slovenia (1992, 1995, 1999, 2005, 2008, and 2011), and the United Kingdom (1990, 1999, 2005, and 2009); and control countries: Belarus (1990, 1996, 2000, 2008, and 2011), Moldova (2006 and 2008), Russian Federation (1990, 1995, 1999, 2006, 2008, and 2011), and Ukraine (1996, 1999, 2006, 2008, and 2011). Our final dataset linked individual-level data from the WVS to country-level policy from treatment and control countries across all time periods and had 68,214 unweighted observations available for analyses.

Measures

To capture changes in attitudes toward work and family roles, we utilized responses to a question from the WVS that was asked of both women and men in every wave across our time periods of interest (1990–2013). The question measured attitudes regarding women's equal rights to employment and asked "when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women." Possible responses included "agree," "disagree," "I don't know," or "neither." For the purposes of this study, only those who selected the response "disagree" were coded as disagreeing and all other responses were coded as not-disagreeing.

Covariates were selected based on a review of the literature and retained in the model if they were significant (Duvander & Andersson, 2006; Givati & Troiano, 2012; Haas & Hwang, 2008). Our fully adjusted model included sex, age (continuous), age squared, birth year, marital status (married or living with partner, previously married or living with partner, single or never married), current work status (working, not working), log GDP per capita, and country-level female labor force participation at the time of survey administration. The second wave of the WVS did not ask respondents their highest level of educational attainment and thus we performed a subanalysis including educational attainment as a covariate but excluding all wave 2 surveys from seven countries (Belarus, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Russia, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom). These countries still had at least one survey before and after parental leave policy change, therefore the total number of countries in our analyses remained unchanged. Adjustments for parity and ethnicity were not significant and therefore not included in our final models. All models adjusted for country and year fixed effects as a means to control for unobserved time-invariant confounders specific to each country as well as shared temporal normative trends. We created a new population weighted sample by re-weighting each survey to represent 4,000 observations. The new population weight is derived from the original weight provided by each participant country. The original weight considers one or more of the sex–age, urban–rural, and/or educational distributions of the population, and is estimated from census files. Here, we wanted data from each country to contribute equally to the analysis, thus preventing one country's observations from counting for more than another country's

observations. Re-weighting so that sample observations are equal for each survey allows all samples to be the same in combined analysis.

Analyses

We employed a difference-in-differences (DID) approach for all analyses to estimate the effect that changing parental leave policies have on attitudes toward women's work status. The DID design requires data from two groups across at least two periods. One group must have undergone an intervention (treatment) and is compared to a second group without an intervention (control). Data must be available for at least two time periods for each group including at least one time period before and after the intervention for the treatment countries. Data from control countries should be from years matched as closely as possible to treatment countries. Through this model, we are able to determine the effects that parental leave laws have on attitudes by measuring the changes in attitudes occurring in countries that improved leave legislation (treatment countries) relative to changes in outcomes occurring in countries that did not provide incentivized parental leave or paid paternity leave throughout the study period (control countries). This quasi-experimental approach measures the average change experienced across the group of treatment countries and compares that to the average change experienced across the group of control countries. Perfect implementation of the policy is not required in order to produce reliable estimates. Rather, this approach provides realistic estimates of the impact with average implementation. In order to examine the temporality of whether policies or attitudes shifted first, we conducted a parallel trends assumption test for countries that had more than one survey available before the policy was implemented. The DID approach requires the parallel trends assumption to ensure the internal validity of the models. This assumption requires that, in the absence of treatment, the trend or difference between treatment and control groups is constant over time. Thus, any change in this trend after the intervention can be attributed to the effects of the intervention. Additionally, the DID estimation requires that the allocation of the intervention is not determined by the outcome, which we can say with reliable certainty is true in this situation. Unlike a randomized control trial, the DID approach does not randomly assign treatment conditions across units of observation. However, when the DID assumptions are met, we are able to obtain a causal effect estimate using observational data.

Model 1 examines the association between changes in parental leave policy and our outcomes using sample weights and fixed effects for country and survey year only. In our second model, we included all individual- and country-level covariates (Model 2). Models three (women only) and four (men only) were gender-stratified subsamples of Model 2. Model 5 excluded wave 2 surveys from all eligible countries in order to further adjust for educational attainment. We

incorporated robust standard errors in all of our models to account for clustering at the country level. Results are presented as odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CI). All analyses were run using Stata Statistical Software: Release 14.

Results

Our final dataset had 68,214 observations (38,195 women; 30,013 men; six missing). Table 1 describes various country- and policy-level characteristics for our treatment and control countries. Out of five treatment countries, two (Germany and Italy) incentivized fathers to take leave and three (Estonia, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom) introduced paid paternity leave of 2 weeks or more. All of our control countries provided paid parental leave of greater than 1 year, though none incentivized fathers to take leave or had any paid paternity leave available throughout the study period.

Table 2 describes the relative change in attitudes regarding women's equality in the workplace in treatment and control countries. We are interested in whether individuals in treatment countries are more likely to disagree with the statement "when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women" than individuals in control countries. Our fully adjusted model (model 2) revealed that both women and men from treatment countries, on average, were 27% more likely to disagree with the statement (OR: 1.27; 95% CI [1.16, 1.40]) than those from control countries. We found only marginal differences when stratifying by gender.

Figure 1 shows the changes in the proportion of respondents stating they disagree with the statement "when jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women" during the period before policy change for our treatment countries and the same matched years for our control countries in order to determine whether we satisfied the parallel trends assumption. In the figure, we visually observe that, in the absence of treatment, the difference in outcome between our treatment and control groups is constant over time, allowing the assumption to hold.

Discussion

Our study found that positive changes to parental leave policy that incentivize or encourage fathers to take time off are associated with improvements in attitudes toward women's equality in the workplace. On average, individuals from treatment countries were more likely to disagree with the statement "when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women." Additionally, we find that these egalitarian changes in attitudes are present in both women and men.

Women have not yet reached equality in the workplace, particularly for women entering perceived male-dominated fields. Even in high-income countries, child rearing continues to be considered a woman's responsibility, creating

Table 1. Country Descriptive Information for Treatment^a and Control^b Countries

Treatment countries	Year of law change	Paid parental leave before (weeks)	Paid parental leave after (weeks)	Paid paternity leave before (weeks)	Paid paternity leave after (weeks)	Was parental leave incentivized?	Region	World Bank Economy	WVS Years and waves	Total unweighted sample size
Estonia	2002	0	62	0	2	No	Europe & Central Asia	High income	1990, 1996, 1999, 2008, 2011	6,085
Germany	2007	95	95	0	0	Yes, 2 months extra	Europe & Central Asia	High income	1990, 1997, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2013	13,684
Italy	2000	25.8	25.8	0	0	Yes, 1 month extra	Europe & Central Asia	High income	1990, 1999, 2005, 2009	6,549
Slovenia	2003	37.1	37.1	0	2.1	No	Europe & Central Asia	High income	1992, 1995, 1999, 2005, 2008, 2011	6,520
United Kingdom	2003	0	0	0	2	No	Europe & Central Asia	High income	1990, 1999, 2005, 2009	5,086
Control countries										
Belarus	Not Applicable	148	148	0	0	No	Europe & Central Asia	Upper middle income	1990, 1996, 2000, 2008, 2011	7,142
Moldova	Not Applicable	148	148	0	0	No	Europe & Central Asia	Lower middle income	2006, 2008	2,597
Russian Federation	Not Applicable	68	68	0	0	No	Europe & Central Asia	Upper middle income	1990, 1995, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2011	12,538
Ukraine	Not Applicable	148	148	0	0	No	Europe & Central Asia	Lower middle income	1996, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2011	8,013
Total										68,214

^aTreatment countries are those with a positive change in parental leave incentive or changes in paternity leave from 0 to at least 2 weeks paid.^bControl countries are countries that have parental leave but no incentive and no paid paternity leave.

Table 2. Odds of Disagreeing with the Statement “When Jobs are Scarce, Men Should Have More Right to a Job than Women” Among Individuals in Treatment Compared to Control Countries

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Weighted, unadjusted <i>N</i> = 66,777	Weighted, adjusted <i>N</i> = 64,974	Weighted, adjusted, women only <i>N</i> = 36,315	Weighted, adjusted, men only <i>N</i> = 28,659	Weighted, adjusted, including education <i>N</i> = 53,285
DID (change in parental leave)	1.26 (1.15, 1.37)	1.27 (1.16, 1.40)	1.27 (1.11, 1.45)	1.30 (1.13, 1.50)	1.20 (1.08, 1.33)
Sex: female		1.78 (1.71, 1.86)			1.85 (1.77, 1.94)
Age		1.01 (0.98, 1.04)	1.04 (1.00, 1.07)	0.98 (0.94, 1.01)	1.00 (0.96, 1.04)
Age squared		1.00 (1.00, 1.00)	1.00 (1.00, 1.00)	1.00 (1.00, 1.00)	1.00 (1.00, 1.00)
Birth year		1.00 (0.98, 1.03)	1.02 (0.99, 1.06)	0.97 (0.94, 1.01)	1.00 (0.96, 1.04)
Marital status: divorced, separated, widowed		1.06 (1.01, 1.12)	1.20 (1.12, 1.28)	0.95 (0.86, 1.05)	1.07 (1.01, 1.14)
Marital status: single, never married		1.28 (1.21, 1.37)	1.59 (1.45, 1.74)	1.08 (0.99, 1.18)	1.27 (1.19, 1.36)
Currently working		1.27 (1.21, 1.33)	1.44 (1.36, 1.54)	1.06 (0.98, 1.18)	1.15 (1.09, 1.21)
GDP per capita		1.00 (1.00, 1.00)	1.00 (1.00, 1.00)	1.00 (1.00, 1.00)	1.00 (1.00, 1.00)
Female labor force participation		0.95 (0.94, 0.97)	0.96 (0.94, 0.98)	0.94 (0.92, 0.97)	1.00 (0.98, 1.02)
Education: completed primary					1.04 (0.90, 1.21)
Education: incomplete secondary					1.43 (1.24, 1.66)
Education: completed secondary					1.80 (1.56, 2.08)
Education: higher than secondary					2.54 (2.19, 2.94)

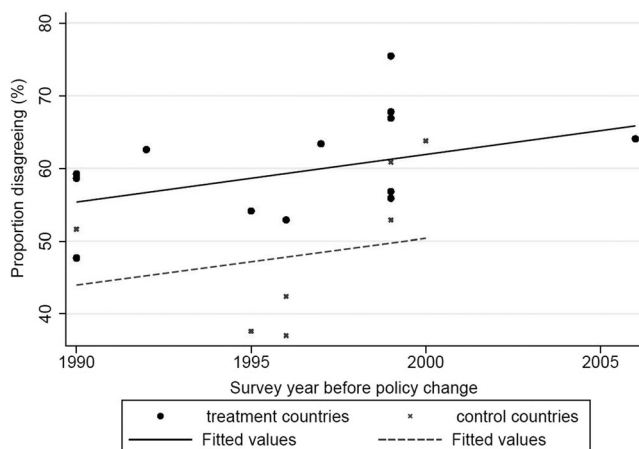


Fig 1. Test of parallel trends assumption: Changes in attitudes over time before parental leave policy change.

Note. Proportion disagreeing refers to statement “when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.”

the expectation that women but not men must negotiate their work commitments and hours in order to meet the needs of young children. Employers often offer women less lucrative work opportunities and fewer opportunities for promotions or greater responsibility (Allen, French, & Poteet, 2016). Of note, the question we utilized in this study measures expectations for both who should be in the workforce as well as who should be at home. Men who believe they have a greater right to employment than women during times of job scarcity also have inherent beliefs about the roles of women outside the workforce when work is limited. Therefore, improving attitudes regarding women’s rights to work also changes norms regarding women as primary caregivers and homemakers.

Only two of our treatment countries incentivized fathers to take parental leave. In Italy, each family was allotted one additional month of parental leave if the father took at least 3 months of leave and, in Germany, fathers were allotted two additional months of parental leave if the father took at least 2 months of the available parental leave. The remaining treatment countries improved their parental leave policies by offering paid paternity leave of greater than 2 weeks. Both approaches resulted in egalitarian changes in attitudes toward women’s workplace status.

One strength of this study is the use of DID methodology, which allows us to examine the impact of parental leave legislation on gendered attitudes in countries with policy adoption and how they compare to changes in countries that did not adopt the policies. The results of this methodology provide a summary measure of

the average experience across the studied countries who adopted the policy. The benefit of this approach is that it does not assume perfect implementation of the law at the country level, nor does it require perfect effectiveness. Rather, it allows us to examine whether a change in policy could work to improve gender norms in a country with average effectiveness and, if so, by how much, mimicking what most often occurs in the real world. Analyses utilizing DID methodology require treatment and control groups to have parallel trends in outcomes prior to the intervention in order for the model to have internal validity. There is no statistical test for this assumption; however, for countries that had two or more survey waves before intervention (all but Moldova), we visually inspected responses over time and found trends to be similar across all countries.

Limitations include: we did not have data on the number of men or women who took advantage of parental leave policies and thus can speak to population effects but not how attitude change may have differed across leave takers and non-leave takers. All survey responses were collected during one-to-one interviews and our use of this data assumes that respondents were truthfully reporting their beliefs regarding women's work equality.

There is a great need for research that critically examines the impact of global policy changes on outcomes related to gender norms. A DID methodological analysis can provide a causal estimate in situations where randomization is not possible; however, the data needed for this type of analysis are difficult to obtain across countries. The same survey questions and sampling methodology need to be used across multiple countries and time periods, thus making the data longitudinal. The present study was restricted to only one question on gender norms given the criteria needed for DID analysis. Additionally, there was a lack of data on other gender norms measures. Future studies should aim to explore the relationship between national parental leave policy changes and gender attitudes toward men's caregiving roles and women's work rights more thoroughly through the use of different surveys, when they become available.

Conclusion

Although the world has taken great strides on gender equality since CEDAW's enactment 40 years ago, without dismantling restrictive gender norms that limit opportunities for men and women alike, its full realization will remain unfulfilled. Restrictive norms remain especially powerful in the context of work and care. Although explicit limits on women's ability to work have substantially diminished, globally, presumptions about women's present or future caregiving responsibilities remain among the greatest barriers to gender equality in the workplace. Further, the "double burden" borne by many mothers in the workforce continues to undermine many women's employment trajectories.

The process of shifting norms around gender is complex. However, thoughtfully constructed laws and policies show significant potential for gradually advancing better health and economic outcomes for all, and more gender-equitable decision-making and sharing of responsibilities (Heymann et al., 2019). Identifying how laws and policies can most effectively move norms is especially critical as the global community works to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). Building on the commitments of both CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, SDG 5 calls on countries to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,” including by examining “[w]hether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.”

A comprehensive understanding of whether laws and policies promote gender equality will require evaluating not only whether they reduce barriers to women’s full participation in public life, but also whether they diminish rather than reinforce underlying attitudes that lead to discrimination. By empirically evaluating how specific policy choices influence these attitudes across countries, we can develop a foundation for the type of evidence-based policymaking needed to accelerate progress on gender equality worldwide.

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