The workplace is sex segregated—men and women are not equally represented in different occupations.

**Occupational sex segregation:** the degree to which men and women are concentrated in occupations that employ workers of predominantly one sex.

This is measured by the dissimilarity index (D).

**Industry sex segregation:** a form of occupational sex segregation in which men and women hold the same job titles in a particular field or industry, but actually perform different jobs.

**Establishment sex segregation:** a form of occupational sex segregation in which women and men hold the same job title at an individual establishment or company, but actually do different jobs.

The U.S. has a dual labor market, which is characterized by one set of jobs employing almost exclusively men and another set of jobs, typically lower paying and with lower prestige, employing almost exclusively women.

The occupational sex segregation limits employment opportunities, particularly for women. In many occupations women face a glass ceiling, invisible barriers that limit women workers’ and minority workers’ upward occupational mobility. However, men in women-dominated occupations may experience a glass escalator (see Williams).

Women may also face sexual harassment, which may involve quid pro quo harassment or the creation of a hostile work environment.

Women make about 76% of what men make. In order to understand, the wage gap, both sex and race must be taken into account. The wage gap between white men and white women is smaller than the gap between minority men and women. However, blacks and Latinos already face a race gap.
What explains the wage gap? R&C evaluate and reject human capital theory, which explains occupational sex segregation in terms of women’s free choices to work in jobs that make few demands on workers and require low personal investment in training or skills acquisition based on the assumption that women’s primary responsibility is in the home.

Human capital theory assumes that women can freely choose which jobs to enter, but this is not the case since women have been excluded from some jobs.

In one test of human capital theory, Kay and Hagan (1995) found that participation variables (e.g., weeks worked per year, hours per week invested in work, and hours per week devoted to child care) accounted for little of the wage gap. Research has shown that sex differences in education explain little of the wage gap (men make more than women at every educational level).

“In sum, what we have found is that occupational sex segregation and the wage gap have little to do with the preferences or free choices of individual workers. A competing explanation of these problems focuses less on the choices and behaviors of workers (the ‘supply side’ of the labor market) and more on the choices and behaviors of employers (the ‘demand side’ of the labor market), including the employers’ tendency toward sex discrimination as well as other forms of discrimination.” (p. 241)

The sexist ideology of the “true women” supports beliefs that women don’t need to work, they worked only until they married or had children, and if they worked after that it was only for “pin money.”

“In short, employers and employees alike, women as well as men, came to see women’s employment as secondary to that of men and to view women workers as less serious about or less committed to their jobs” (p. 242). Research doesn’t support these beliefs.

**Statistical discrimination:** employers do not hire anyone who is a member of a group they think has low productivity, regardless of an individual applicant’s qualifications or intentions.

Although sex discrimination in the workplace is illegal, comparable worth discrimination is not. Employers can pay men more for jobs that are comparable to lower-paying jobs held by women.

**Comparable worth:** the policy of paying workers equally when they perform different jobs that have similar value in terms of such factors as skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions