

# Gender equality



**Gender equality** is a fundamental human right. It implies that people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities, regardless of their sex or sexuality. This means that everyone should be free to **pursue** whatever career and lifestyle they choose without discrimination.

## ■ Meaning of the term *gender*

The term *gender* is not to be confused with the term *sex*. While the former, in fact, has sociological implications based on individuals' behaviour in a social context, the latter refers to biological features and is associated with the physical and physiological characteristics of humans or animals. *Gender* therefore includes the attitudes, feelings, and behaviours that a given culture associates to people or social groups. • Unfortunately, such gender stereotypes often lead to discrimination and inequalities.

## ■ Gender inequality

Even though gender inequality concerns both men and women, it has always been regarded mostly as a women's issue. Since ancient times women have faced **widespread** and unfair discrimination, have been deprived of some rights or have been completely dependent on their fathers' or husbands' decisions; their role in society, confined to a domestic sphere, has always been valued less than men's.

## ■ Current situation

Some progress towards women's **empowerment** has been made over the course of the years, however, women in all countries are still subjected to several forms of unfair treatment, including discrimination, **harassment**, domestic violence, forced marriage, **denial** of property rights, lack of access to education, work and



health. Additionally, the proportion of women in decision-making positions both at political and economic levels of society is still inferior to men. They are also paid less than men even if they perform the same tasks. ••

## ■ SDGs: Goal 5

It is widely recognised that achievement of gender equality is essential to peace, democracy and sustainable economic development. This is the reason why it has been included in the 2030 Agenda, representing Goal 5 of the 17 SDGs. World nations have committed themselves to:

- guaranteeing access to education;
- eliminating any form of violence against women and girls;
- **banning** early and forced marriage;
- guaranteeing equal participation at all levels;
- adopting policies to support women's empowerment.

Reducing the gender gap and empowering women will accelerate the progress towards sustainable development across the world.



An example could be the common belief that "boys never cry" and "girls play with dolls".

Today, women still earn 24% less than men, on average.

**to ban:** *proibire*  
**denial:** *negazione, rifiuto*  
**empowerment:** *emancipazione*

**harassment:** *molestia*  
**to pursue:** *perseguire*  
**widespread:** *diffuso*

## 1 Complete the sentences with a word or a phrase.

1. Gender equality concerns not only women but .....
2. Regardless of their sex or sexuality, everyone should have the same .....
3. *Gender* derives from ..... and not ..... characteristics.
4. Women have always experienced .....
5. Some women's lives have depended on their .....
6. Despite some improvements, the ..... gap is still significant today.
7. Women are still denied ..... positions and get ..... wages.
8. Goal 5 highlights the crucial ..... of gender equality.

## 2 Read what three famous women say about gender equality. For statements 1-5, choose who says the following.

- |  |                          |   |                          |
|--|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Disparity can lead to fanaticism.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Women who perform the same functions as men ought to get paid equally. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Women should decide about their own bodies.       | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. In some parts of the world girls have no access to education.          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Compared to her male colleagues she is underpaid. | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |                          |

### A. Emma Watson

I am from Britain and think it is right that as a woman I am paid the same as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and decision-making of my country. I think it is right that socially I am afforded the same respect as men. But sadly, I can say that there is no one country in the world where all women can expect to receive these rights.

### B. Ursula Von der Leyen

I am proud that last week the Commission presented two proposals to address two of the great injustices that women still face: the gender pay gap and the gender employment gap. Women in Europe are paid, on average, 24% less than men. This is simply not right. So, we are proposing a European Directive for Pay Transparency. Equal work deserves

equal pay and women must know whether their employers treat them fairly. And when this is not the case, they must have the power to fight back and get what they deserve.

### C. Malala Yousafzai

Education is vital for security around the world because extremism grows alongside inequality in places where people feel they have no opportunity, no voice, no hope.

When women are educated, there are more jobs for everyone. When mothers can keep their children alive and send them to school, there is hope. But around the world, 130 million girls are out of school today. And they are fighting to go to school.

