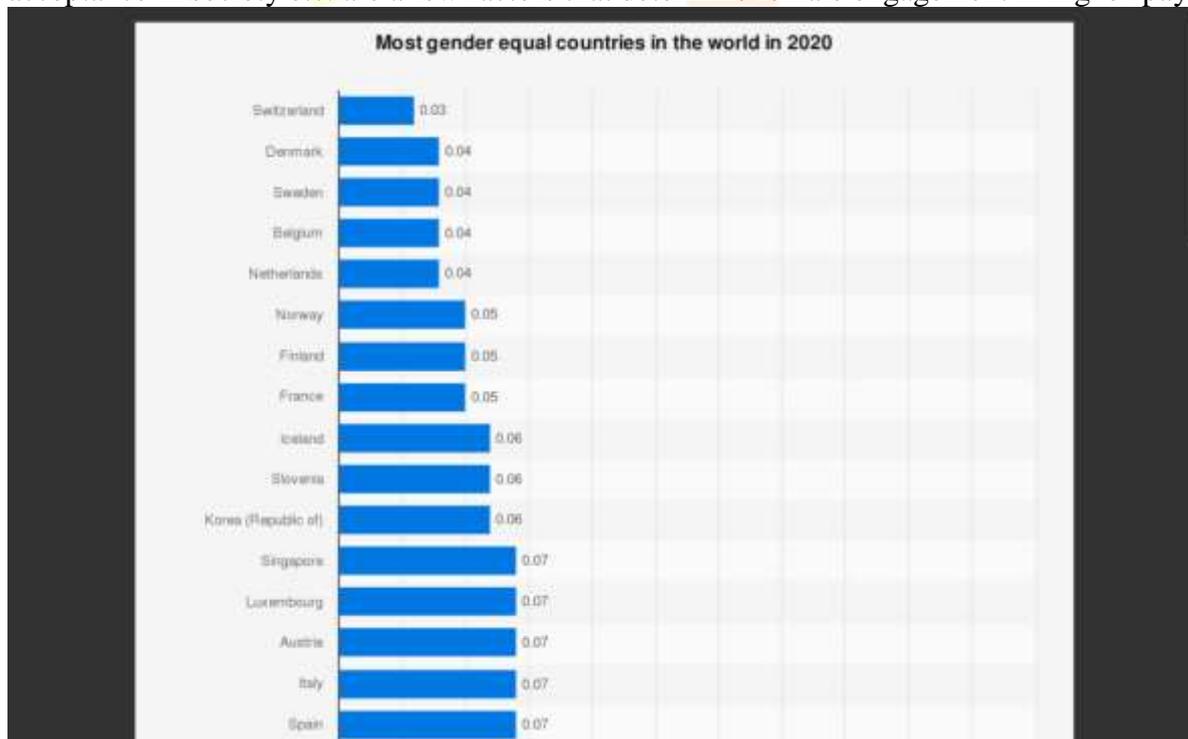




# Feminism and its particular impact on the female demographic in employment statistics in Sweden versus the united states of America.

## Abstract

Perceived by multitudes as an egalitarian society and being the first country to have a feminist foreign policy, Sweden is a strong contender in the gender equality sphere. In the UNDP's "most gender-equal countries in the world 2020" findings, Sweden stood third, just below Denmark. The paper examines Swedish feminism in terms of female employment statistics as compared to other countries like the United States of America. It also examines a particular phenomenon called the 'gender equality paradox. Using an international database on women working in private vs. public sectors in the Nordic countries, we found that a lot more women are a part of the workforce in the public sector as compared to a few in the private sector despite the Nordic being more "equal" than most countries in the world. 1. The findings also led to research about the psychological factors that are responsible for this stark difference. Statistics and mediation analysis likewise suggest that life quality, availability of choice and lack of hindrances in women's decision-making processes, the measure of acceptance in society etc. are a few factors that determine female engagement in higher-paying jobs.



## Keywords

Gender equality paradox, Gender pay gap, egalitarian societies, paternal leave, stereotypes.

Sweden is arguably one of the most equal countries in the world in terms of employment opportunities given to both women and men. It ranked first on the European Union Gender Equality Index with an all-time high score of 83.8 points out of 100, maintaining this lead since 2010. After several years of pursuing human rights,

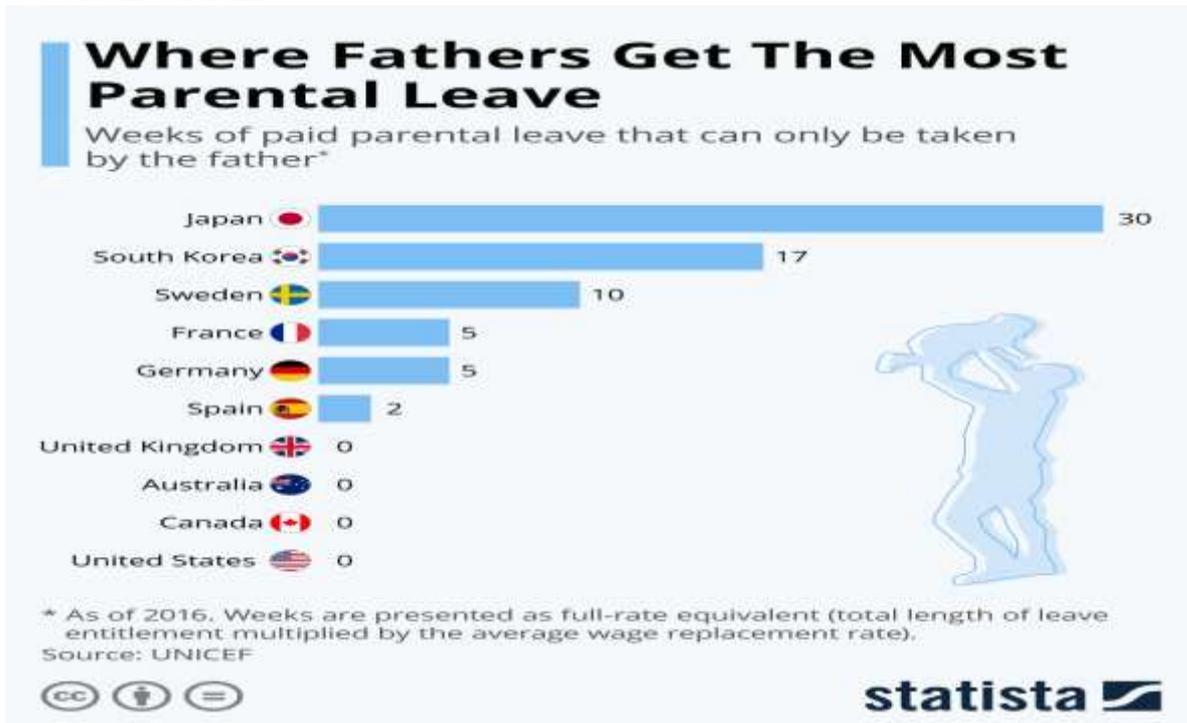
gender equality and the promotion of equal pay and opportunities for both men and women, the country established its feminist foreign policy in 2014, propagating the conviction that the world cannot function properly when a large part of the population is excluded. 2.

In terms of paid maternity leave, it was observed that the US remains lightyears behind. While Sweden allows 35 weeks of paid maternity leave on an average 3.

(calculated in terms of full-rate equivalent\*), the United States does not give any paid maternity leave. In Sweden, fathers are entitled to 13% of available parental leave (even though 75 percent of paid parental leave is taken by mothers which adversely affects their careers) On the other hand, employers in the United States are not compelled to provide paid parental leave to mothers or fathers, yet some do so merely to recruit and keep workers Close to 90% of Swedish fathers take paternity leave. In 2013, some 340,000 dads took a total of 12 million days' leave, equivalent to about seven weeks each.11

\*total length of leave entitlement multiplied by the average wage replacement rate.

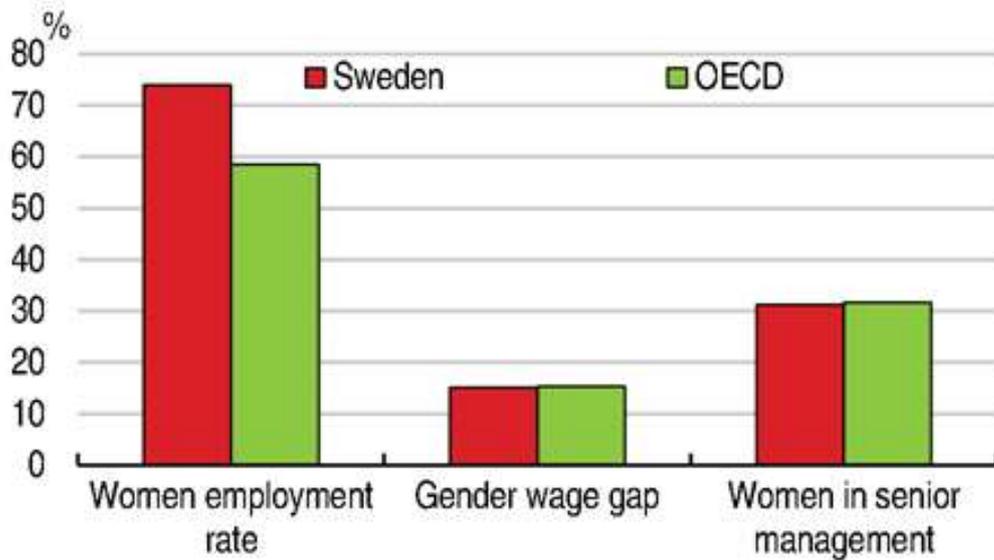
SOURCE: UNICEF



Employability and pay:

In 2019, the average monthly wage for female workers in Sweden was 25,500 Swedish kronor, while the average monthly wage for men in the same category was 29,500 Swedish kronor. For civil servants, the disparity was even greater: males earned 45,000 kronor a month, compared to 38,000 kronor for females. 4.

### Gender wage gaps and the glass ceiling remain

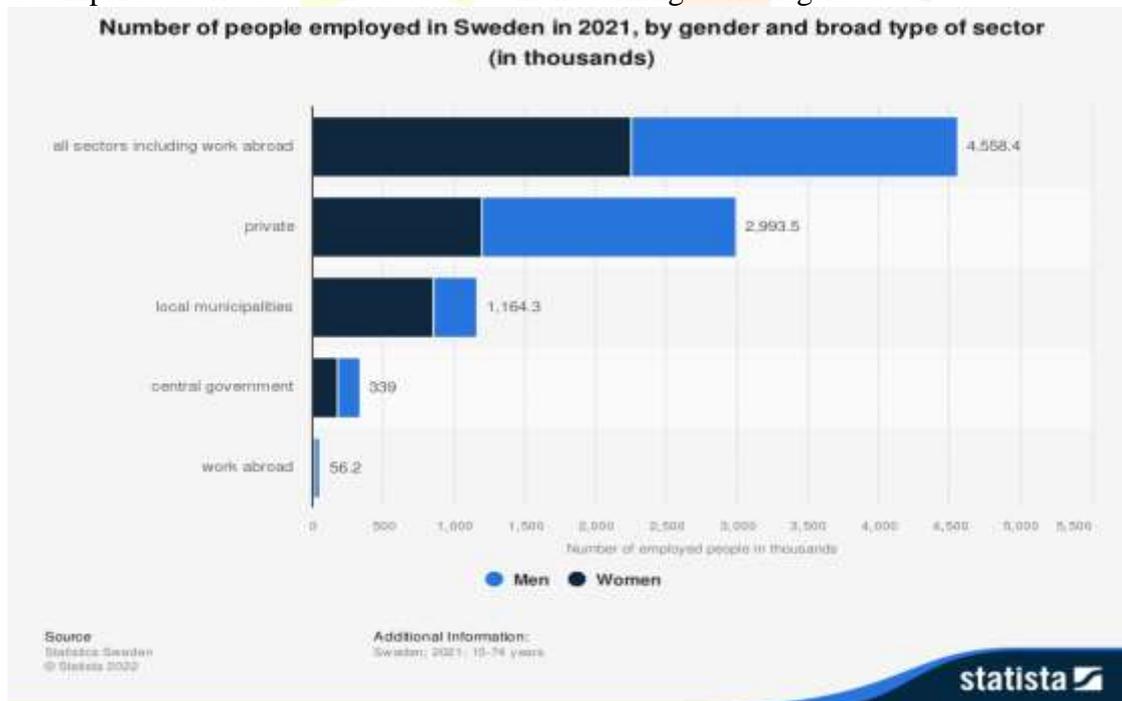


Source: OECD Employment database and ILO KILM database.

Women are also underrepresented as entrepreneurs and only 6% of Swedish women, as compared to 15% of Swedish men are self-employed. However, to overcome this obstacle, the Swedish government has a “women’s ambassadors programme” to promote female entrepreneurship. This scheme provides financial assistance to 22% of the businesswomen in the country. 5.

Sector-wise representation:

In the public sector, Sweden and Finland have the largest proportion of female employees (in 2014, 72 percent of workers in the Swedish public sector were women). However, in the private sector, Sweden and Denmark have the lowest proportions of female workers. Despite the US ranking 30 in the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap index 2021 compared to Sweden which stands at number 5, just 36 % of the women are managers as compared to the US with 43 % of women working as managers.



In politics, women make up about 47 percent of the Swedish parliament, compared to around 28 percent in North American countries 6.

Keeping all these things in mind, one still expects women to be leading at the top in Sweden. However, this is not the case as observed by a phenomenon called the “gender equality paradox”. This phenomenon observes a large gap between men and women who pursue the fields of STEM i.e. science, technology, engineering and mathematics . 7.

The “gender-equality-paradox”, refers to the belief that egalitarian countries with a high sense of social security, gender equality and minimum pay gap, have fewer women working at the top i.e. with a minimal number of women working in STEM than other countries of the world that are not necessarily deemed as ‘equal’ in terms of gender equality. Although one cannot use the ‘Gender Gap Index’ to validate this concept, we can make use of ‘The Implicit Association test’ to do the same, as successfully demonstrated by the psychologist Brian Nosek. Collecting and comparing results from 34 nations, his team concluded that most people associate science, mathematics, and technology with men rather than with women. 8. This result was starker in egalitarian societies like Sweden than in places like the United States of America . Researchers have found that countries that generally have a higher standard of living and usually are welfare states, have lesser women opting for STEM and more women going in the public sector since these countries already provide women security, they feel like they have the choice to pursue whatever they wish to , which is mostly care giving roles or jobs involving languages.9 On the other hand, countries that are less stable and more prone to gender inequality, have more women opting for STEM in hopes of becoming more financially stable.

#### CONCLUSION:

Sweden might have a reputation for being the most gender equal but in terms of female representation in business , one cannot say the same . The main cause of this disparity, according to Ms Lundeteg, is that old gender stereotypes still persist despite decades of laws aimed at even things out. 10.. Even though both parents are given a parental leave, women still take 80% of the provided parental leaves as subconsciously they adhere to basic care giving roles. Women in less stable countries feel like they are less economically stable and desire a feeling of constancy in their lives henceforth going for managerial positions or careers in STEM. Perhaps, countries that do not give women a free choice of careers subconsciously makes them want to go after jobs that seem “unachievable” and make them more ambitious in ways . This drive to “break barriers” is not that evident in more equal countries for the women there do not particularly feel a need to prove their position in society. Their place in society is already protected by the law and therefore they choose “less challenging “ careers or adhere to the “stay at home” culture. The women here feel that they will not be judged either ways(whether they go after STEM or Caregiving roles) and thus, make a choice that is very personal. In a society where women are not condemned about their career choices, they automatically become more confident in all other aspects of their life too . We also noted that equality in opportunity does not necessarily mean equality in outcome for the inherent mindsets of people deeming women as “caregivers” and women themselves, conforming to these traditional norms , has not yet ceased. Therefore, even if women in Sweden have a lot of opportunity to go after whichever career they desire, they do not reach the “top “since various factors discussed above hinder this process.

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