

# Example by StudyDriver

Source: <https://studydriver.com/feminization-of-poverty/>

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## Feminization of Poverty Example

In the past decade, the percentage of women who have joined the workforce in the United States has greatly increased, almost doubling from the 1960s to the 2010s (Shin: Oct 9, 2018). Even though there is a spike in women working, why is it that women represent the highest proportion of the population in poverty? This phenomenon is referred to as the 'feminization of poverty'. Feminization of poverty is the reality that of all people who are below the poverty line, almost 60 percent are women, and of all families, 50 percent consist of single mothers with no husbands (Shin Oct 11, 2018). A combination of the available jobs to women, gender discrimination, lack of childcare and lack of government support all contribute to the cycle that continues to keep women in poverty.

Since women began entering the workforce, they were confined to jobs that are commonly known as 'pink collar jobs' (Shin Oct 9, 2018). These jobs are mainly administrative and service-oriented work, such as secretaries, preschool teachers, nurses or child care providers. Women are not entering these types of jobs due to lack of education- women today are entering and graduating college at a higher rate than men- but due to a systemic and societal push towards positions that have classically been occupied by women. These positions often make women seem below, or inferior to men, and offer little opportunity to move up or be promoted even if the

woman were to ask. Commonly, service oriented and administrative work pays a significant amount less, which shows in the difference in median income for men and women. In 2011, the median income for women was 77 percent less than the median income for men (Shin Oct 9, 2018).

In the workforce, women experience a great deal of gender discrimination that keeps them from obtaining a higher-level position with a higher pay grade. Forms of workplace discrimination such as aggression from male coworkers and being ignored during decision-making cause women to avoid entering higher paying, typically male dominated professions, as they feel less valued by those they work with (Williams 1992:344). Not only do women experience discrimination in fields that are classically male, but in those that are typically female as well. As men began entering professions that had been dominated by women, they experienced a glass escalator, being shot upward rapidly to upper level management positions even if they had less experience than their female coworkers (Williams 1992: 342). Many men even reported that when being hired, the thing that gave them a leg up was being a man in a female dominated domain. This creates a cycle of women being confined by the glass ceiling, a barrier between women being promoted to higher level positions created by the sexist discriminatory attitudes of men who were fast tracked into high level, high paying positions (Williams 1992: 342).

Women have been ridiculed throughout history for the choice to not have children, as men have solely seen women as home-makers and child-care providers. Women are often not considered when hiring into upper level positions with high workloads, due to the fact that men believe they will not be able to handle their responsibilities at work and their responsibilities as mothers. Most of these women are highly educated with a large enough income and support system to land on their feet if their family dynamics changed, possibly due to divorce or death, but many women of lower socioeconomic status do not have these luxuries. In the 1950s, one in twenty children were born to single mother households, and now that statistic has gone up to one in three (Edin, Kefalas 2005:8). Single mothers now face what is called a triple whammy (Albelda, Tilly 1996:605). They are working low paying jobs that barely earn enough to keep food on the table, taking on other under the table work while attempting to take care of their children without the assistance of a co-parent or another adult. Even under such difficult circumstances, the workforce is very unforgiving to this kind of situation and women find it hard to

maintain jobs, seeking out welfare to make ends meet instead.

With the current welfare system, even if a woman is extremely conscientious and limits her spending to make ends meet for her family, in a study by Edin and Lein, cash welfare, food stamps, and SSI only cover three-fifths of welfare-reliant mothers' expenses (Edin, Lein 1997:324). If a woman receives child support, her food stamps from welfare could be cut significantly. If she begins a part time, low paying job that doesn't pay nearly enough to support her family, her welfare can be reduced to the point where she is just as poor as before receiving welfare. With how the welfare system is set up, the cycle of poverty is able to thrive. Women become trapped in a cycle where they do not have enough support, or money, to provide adequate childcare to be able to search for and maintain a decent paying job that allows them to provide what is necessary for their families.

In order to improve the feminization of poverty within this country, many measures need to be instituted to ensure that women get a fair chance. Laws that prohibit the current wage gap and force employers to pay men and women the same wages for the same work need to be put in place. Further programming and tax dollars need to be put towards supporting single, low income mothers by creating free or extremely low-priced childcare facilities where mothers can feel safe leaving their children while they get a degree or find a job that will allow them to support their families in the long run. Educational programs beginning in primary education that teach young boys and girls about changing stereotypical gender roles, encouraging young girls that they can do and be what they want, while breaking down the cycle of sexism created by men by teaching young boys that girls are their equals. Rather than ridiculing and kicking down women trying to get back up on their feet, programs need to be set in place that help them to regain their strength so they can continue to provide for their families and contribute to the national economy.