

Collection Insee References



Men and women

Equality under the microscope



Press pack

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Contents

Introduction

Overview

The reports

1. Male and female access to managerial positions at the start of their working life: convergence underway?
2. Gender pension gap: the situation in Europe
3. Differential legal treatment for male and female delinquency
4. Social roles of men and women

Regional publications

INSEE in a few words

The *Insee References* collection provides a periodic overview of major economic and social issues. The data and commentaries are based on public statistical sources and analysis.

In the same collection

Published

French economy, 2016 Edition
Enterprises in France, 2016 Edition
France, social portrait 2016 Edition
Housing conditions in France, 2017 Edition
Tableaux de l'économie française, 2017 Edition

Forthcoming

Emploi, chômage et revenus du travail, 2017 Edition
L'économie française, 2017 Edition

Introduction

Men and women – Equality under the microscope takes stock of today's gender inequalities in France. This edition follows on from the publication in 2012 of: *Men and women – A view of gender equality*.

It provides an **overview** of the pathways followed by men and women at different ages (education, family and professional life, retirement) and the resulting inequalities.

There are **four reports** providing in-depth analyses of different aspects of gender inequalities.

- ✓ The first describes recent progress made in France on **female access to managerial categories** at the start of their working lives.
- ✓ The second is an inventory of the **pension gap** between men and women **in retirement in Europe**.
- ✓ The third report looks at male and female **delinquency** and **differences in the way they are dealt with in the legal system** in France.
- ✓ The last report covers **stereotypes** of the **social roles** of men and women.

Around thirty themed information sheets present key data and European comparisons, to complete this overview of men and women.

Key figures in the reports

Women are in the majority among **students: 55%** in 2015.

84% of parents at the head of a **single-parent family** are women.

Other characteristics and qualifications being equal, women have **30% less chance** of becoming **managers** at the start of their career than men.

In 2014, the **wage income** of women was **24% lower** on average than that of men.

In 2011, the average **pension** received by women aged 65 or more was **47% lower** than that received by their male counterparts.

In 2014, **37%** of presumed female delinquents were considered **non-prosecutable**, compared with 26% for men.

Overview

Education, family life, professional life, retirement: pathways and inequalities between men and women at different ages in life

p.9 of the publication

Men and women do not go through different ages in life in the same way, on both a family level and a professional one. Although similarities do exist (notably in terms of participation in the labour market), major gender differences persist from childhood to old age as well as at every intermediate age : girls outperform boys at school; residential autonomy and the founding of a family are reached later among young men; as adults, single-parent situations and work interruptions related to children are more common among women; wage income is lower for women; at more advanced ages, women retire later and their pensions are lower.

Girls outperform boys at school but do not follow the same educational paths

Girls outperform boys in primary school, and the gap widens in secondary school. In high school, girls are more likely to choose general and technology education, representing 54% of the population in this path, compared with 43% in vocational education and 29% in apprenticeships. However, they remain in the minority in scientific subjects.

Diplôme le plus élevé obtenu selon l'âge et le sexe en 2015

	25-34 ans		35-44 ans		45-54 ans		55-64 ans		en %
	Femmes	Hommes	Femmes	Hommes	Femmes	Hommes	Femmes	Hommes	
Aucun diplôme, certificat d'études ou brevet des collèges	11,8	14,7	14,3	16,6	25,3	22,9	38,3	30,6	
CAP, BEP ou équivalent	16,6	21,9	17,5	24,8	28,7	37,0	25,2	35,4	
Baccalauréat, brevet professionnel ou équivalent	22,3	22,6	20,4	20,8	16,6	13,1	14,0	11,7	
Supérieur court ¹	18,0	14,4	22,1	15,7	15,0	11,7	11,4	8,2	
Supérieur long ²	31,3	26,4	25,7	22,1	14,4	15,3	11,1	14,1	
Ensemble	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	
Part de bacheliers ou plus	71,6	63,4	68,2	58,6	46,0	40,1	36,5	34,0	

1. Notamment DUT, BTS, Deug, diplômes paramédicaux et sociaux de niveau équivalent.

2. Notamment licence, master, doctorat, diplômes d'écoles de commerce et d'ingénieurs.

Champ : France métropolitaine, personnes âgées de 25 à 64 ans.

Source : Insee, enquête Emploi 2015.

Women are more likely to continue studies in higher education, in particular in long courses and they are in the majority among students (55% in 2015). Nevertheless, the gender-related character of career choices is accentuated: with the exception of medicine, women remain in the minority on selective or scientific courses.

As a result of their educational paths, women in recent generations are more qualified than men, in contrast to previous generations where the opposite was true.

Reaching residential autonomy and founding a family still occur later on for men

Young women access their first job slightly later on than men, but generally reach the major milestones of residential autonomy and the founding of a family earlier. In 2013, half of young women in the 1978-1988 generation left the parental home at least once before the age of 19 and a half, compared with the age of 21 among men in this generation.

The median age for the living together as a couple among generations born between 1978 and 1988 is 24.9 years for men against 22.5 years for women. The gender difference is even greater at the birth of the first child, with the gap reaching up to three years.

In the intermediary age groups, single-parent situations are more common and the formation of a new union takes longer for women

While the most common situation is for people to live in a couple, there is an increasing tendency for unions to break up. Women take longer than men to form a new union after a break-up, especially when they have children, and they represent 84% of parents at the head of single-parent families. In addition, fertility remains high (total fertility rate of 1.93 for women and 1.94 for men in 2016).

Activity behaviors and unemployment rates are converging in the working-age population

In the working-age population, women's activity behaviors are similar to those of men in spite of this high level of fertility. In 2015, 67.6% of women aged 15-64 years participated in the labour market (i.e. they were in employment or unemployment) against 75.5% of men in the same age group.

The convergence is even more noticeable for the risk of unemployment. While in the mid-1970s female unemployment had always remained higher than that of men, the situation was reversed as of 2013. In 2015, 9.5% of working women aged 15 or more were in unemployment as defined by the ILO, compared with 10.5% of men of the same age.

Temporary withdrawal from activity and part-time work remain more common among women

Work interruptions relating to children remain more common for women than for men. For mothers, the level of activity depends on the number of children, whereas this is not the case for fathers. Working mothers are also eight times more likely to be working part time than men. Nearly half of all mothers who work part time say that they do so in order to look after their children (or another member of the family), compared with barely one out of five fathers working part time.

For some women, switching to part time or temporarily withdrawing from the labour market is a way of better reconciling professional life and family life, with domestic work remaining unevenly split between men and women.

Taux d'activité, taux d'emploi et temps de travail selon le sexe, le nombre et l'âge des enfants en 2015

	en %					
	Femmes			Hommes		
	Taux d'activité	Taux d'emploi	Taux de temps partiel parmi les femmes en emploi	Taux d'activité	Taux d'emploi	Taux de temps partiel parmi les hommes en emploi
1 enfant	85	77	29	92	85	3
1 enfant de moins de trois ans	77	67	23	95	86	5
2 enfants	88	81	31	96	91	4
2 enfants, dont un au moins de moins de trois ans	66	60	47	94	86	5
3 enfants ou plus	73	62	44	93	86	5
3 enfants ou plus, dont un au moins de moins de trois ans	40	35	50	92	80	8
Ensemble	79	72	33	94	87	4

Champ : France hors Mayotte, femmes et hommes âgés de 15 à 64 ans, vivant avec au moins un enfant de moins de 18 ans.

Lecture : 77 % des mères avec un enfant de moins de 3 ans sont actives et 67 % sont en emploi. Parmi ces dernières, 23 % travaillent à temps partiel.

Source : Insee, enquête Emploi 2015.

Little diversity in sectors of activity and a high sectoral concentration for female employment

Access to managerial positions is making clear progress for women and in particular for the younger generations. However, noticeable differences remain in posts held between men and women, who continue not to work in the same sectors of activity. 44.8% of women work in general government, teaching, human health and social action, compared with 18.5% of men. This sectoral labour concentration among women has evolved little over time.

Wage gaps between men and women are narrowing very slowly

In 2014 across the private sector and the civil service, women's wage income was on average 24% lower than that of men. The gender gap in full time equivalent wages was 17%, and explains nearly three quarters of the difference in wage income. It also stems in part from the differences in individual characteristics and position occupied. Nevertheless, there is an "unexplained" part of the difference which remains, which may reflect wage discrimination practices or unfair processes that do not work in favour of women at different moments in their career.

In twenty years, the wage income gap between men and women has shrunk slightly, from 27% in 1995 to 24% in 2014, in part as a result of the 2008-2009 crisis.

Gender differences in standards of living are smaller than those in payroll income, and stem from people living alone or at the head of single-parent families. In particular, mothers of single-parent families have a much lower standard of living than their male counterparts (- 24%).

Differences in retirement age and pension levels remain significant

Differences in careers between men and women mean that there is an age gap in retirement ages and pension levels. On average, women retire a year later than men and their direct entitlement pensions are 42% lower. Marital rights and family entitlements nevertheless reduce this difference in pensions to 26% between men and women.

Women live longer, but more often alone or in institutions and situations of dependency

Women are in the great majority among those aged 65 years or more (57%), and this percentage increases with age due to their longer life expectancy. After 65, women are more likely to live alone than men, and more often in institutions and in situations of dependency.

The reports

Male and female access to managerial positions at the start of working life: convergence underway?

p.31 of the publication

In 2013, for the first time, the proportion of young women occupying a managerial position three years after entering the workforce was virtually the same as for young men. Since 2001, women have also made progress in access to supervisory positions although they still lag behind their male counterparts. In addition, for all women managers and those with supervisory responsibilities, their working conditions and notably their wages have moved closer to those of men. Despite this, the increase in the number of young women in managerial positions at the start of their working life is still not commensurate with the scale of their educational investment. They are still more exposed to part-time employment and fixed-term contracts and their professional space remains split ; compared with men with the same characteristics and qualifications, women are still 30% less likely to become managers, irrespective of whether the position is linked with supervisory responsibilities.

2001-2013: a period of convergence for men and women in managerial positions

Between 2001 and 2013, the proportion of managers in the working population increased by 5 points in France, and concerned 20% of men and 15% of women. The growth of this category has mostly benefited the latter, who have been progressively occupying previously male-dominated professional positions. Legislative advances encouraging gender equality in professional life have without doubt contributed to this catch-up movement; public policies over the past years have required greater wage equality in companies for men and women, as well as greater parity in access to supervisory and managerial positions and roles. On the other hand, the structural evolution of the higher education offering has contributed to increasing the number of new graduates and fostered professional aspirations in line with managerial-level work positions.

In 2013, 20% of young men and women were managers three years after completing their initial studies

These different advances have tended to promote the progression of women in the younger generations into managerial positions. In 2013, the proportion of young women within the young working population occupying a managerial position three years after entering the labour market equalled that of young men: 20% of both young men and women who graduated in 2010, compared with 13% of young women and 17% of young men twelve years earlier (those who graduated in 1998). In other words, for every 100 young managers in 2013, 49 were women compared with 41 in 2001. The equality seen here is an important first in the history of the professional integration of young people, with such large proportions of young women reaching these professional positions being unprecedented, even though this result was part of a long-term trend.

Part des cadres et des cadres encadrant.e.s parmi les personnes en emploi en 2001 et 2013 trois ans après la sortie de formation initiale

	Situation en 2001 de la Génération 1998				Situation en 2013 de la Génération 2010			
	Ensemble	Femmes	Hommes	Part des femmes	Ensemble	Femmes	Hommes	Part des femmes
Cadres (sur l'ens. de la Génération)	12	10	14	41	13	13	13	49
Cadres (sur les actifs occupés)	15	13	17	41	20	20	20	49
Cadres encadrant.e.s (sur actifs occupés)	5,5	4	7	35	6,3	5,6	7	44
Effectifs de la Génération	695 431	340 441	354 990	49	674 569	330 308	344 261	49
Effectifs des actifs occupés	568 225	264 660	303 565	47	459 072	225 260	233 811	49

Champ : France métropolitaine, jeunes en emploi trois ans après la sortie de formation initiale, champs comparables.

Sources : Céreq, enquêtes Génération 1998 et 2010.

Education capital: a key factor in the increase in the number of women in managerial categories

One of the central elements behind the narrowing of the difference in access to managerial categories is the higher level of education of young women compared with young men, and notably the significant increase in the number of women in higher education observed in recent generations. Despite this, notable differences remain between men and women regarding access to managerial work, considering the majority proportion of women graduates. Young women graduates should more often be managers than they actually are. All things being equal – and notably equal qualifications –, young women still have less chance than their male counterparts of accessing a managerial position in the first three years of their working life.

Young women managers more likely to be in temporary and part-time employment

Although generally speaking temporary employment (contracts other than open-ended and civil-service contracts) is less common among managers than all other graduates, women are systematically more exposed than men, and the difference is even more noticeable among managers than all other graduate positions after three years in working life. The differences between men and women became even more pronounced between 2001 and 2013, rising from 9 to 13 points. Similarly, while part-time work remains less common among women managers than in other socioeconomic categories, it still primarily concerns the female population, with approximately 9% of women managers or those with supervisory responsibilities in this position in 2013, compared with 3% and 1% respectively of their male counterparts.

Men and women continue to occupy different professional spaces and functions, with women remaining in the minority in the traditional male strongholds (engineers and technical managers). Young women managers are twice as likely to work in the civil service than men (31% against 16% in 2013).

The wage gap between young men and women narrows

For young managers, women's median wage stood at 93% of the male median wage in 2013, compared with 87% in 2001, including full-time and part-time work. This convergence is mainly the result of the greater wage increase for women in two professional categories: "Professors and scientific professions" in which the median wage for women has gone from 91% of the male wage in 2001 to 100% in 2013 (and even 108% among supervisory managers); and "Administrative and sales executives" in which the relative median wage increased by 4 points, going from 89% to 93%, between 2001-2013 – and by 9 points for women with supervisory responsibilities, reaching 95% in 2013. In the other employment categories, men's and women's wages have remained close from one cohort to another. For example, the median relative wage for women engineers and technical managers in companies has remained constant at 95% of that of men, a difference which is the same as the one observed for managers across the industry (93%).

Without doubt, a combination of a long-term decreasing trend in the gender wage gap, greater awareness among companies about professional and wage equality in recruitment, and the slowing of economic growth which has had a notable impact on starting wages for the past generation, have led to the convergence seen.

Salaires nets mensuels médians des jeunes cadres et cadres encadrant.e.s en 2001 et 2013

en euros courants

	Génération 1998						Génération 2010					
	Cadres			Cadres encadrant.e.s			Cadres			Cadres encadrant.e.s		
	Femmes	Hommes	Écart (en %)	Femmes	Hommes	Écart (en %)	Femmes	Hommes	Écart (en %)	Femmes	Hommes	Écart (en %)
Cadres de la fonction publique	1 524	1 601	95	1 583	1 651	96	1 900	2 000	95	2 000	2 105	95
Professeur.e.s, professions scientifiques	1 524	1 678	91	1 852	1 982	93	2 100	2 100	100	2 800	2 600	108
Professions de l'information, des arts et des spectacles	1 372	1 512	91	1 423	1 672	85	1 680	1 733	97	1 850	2 050	90
Cadres administratifs et commerciaux d'entreprise	1 906	2 147	89	1 906	2 213	86	2 200	2 375	93	2 300	2 413	95
Ingénieur.e.s et cadres techniques d'entreprise	1 982	2 104	94	2 077	2 147	97	2 200	2 309	95	2 300	2 383	97
Ensemble	1 734	1 982	87	1 875	2 134	88	2 100	2 260	93	2 300	2 383	97
Ensemble (en euros constants 2013)	2 123	2 427	87	2 296	2 613	88	2 100	2 260	93	2 300	2 383	97

Champ : France métropolitaine, diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur en emploi de cadre trois ans après la fin de leurs études, champs comparables.

Lecture : les femmes de la Génération 1998 occupant un emploi de cadre de la fonction publique en 2001 percevaient un salaire médian de 1 524 euros, soit 95 % du salaire médian de leurs condisciples masculins.

Source : Cereq, enquêtes Génération 1998 et 2010.

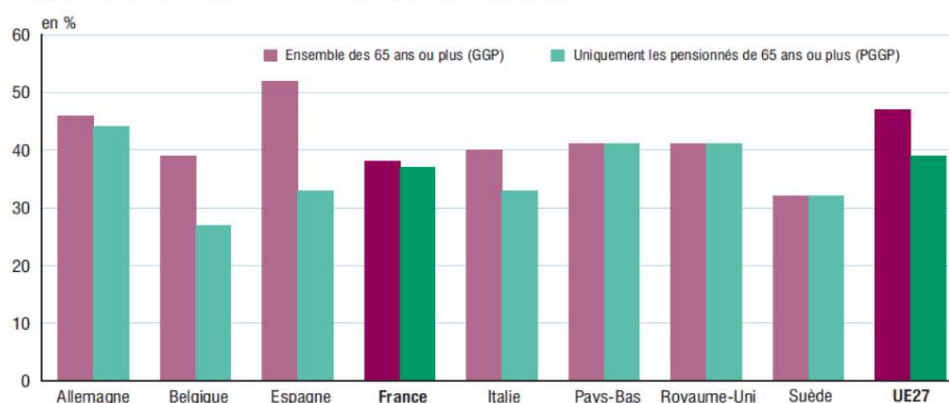
Despite greater participation by women in the labour market in Europe over the past few decades, there are still career differences between men and women in terms of both the number of years of working life and the time worked, as well as the level of pay. They lead to significantly lower pensions for women. This pension gap is expected to remain. It leads to small gender differences in terms of median standard of living and poverty, in particular when living in a union allows the pooling of resources. On the other hand, the situation of widows living alone and without direct entitlement remains insecure.

Career differences lead to a gender pension gap

In general in the developed countries, female activity differs from male activity through four specific characteristics: lower participation in the labour market, a higher proportion of part-time work, a higher number of career interruptions, and lower wage levels. These differences reflect personal choices as well as cultural specificities, institutional obligations (duration of maternity leave, crèche and early-age childcare offering etc.) or wage or recruitment discrimination.

In 2011, the average pension received by women aged 65 or over was 47% less than that received by their male counterparts. In the eight European countries studied, this difference ranged from 32% in Sweden to 52% in Spain. In Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the gap was around 40%, whereas Germany was a little higher, at 46%.

Écart de pension moyenne entre femmes et hommes en 2011, pour l'ensemble des 65 ans ou plus (GGP) et pour les seuls pensionnés (PGGP)



Champ : personnes âgées de 65 ans ou plus (GGP) ; personnes âgées de 65 ans ou plus et percevant une pension (PGGP).
Lecture : en 2011, les pensions des hommes de plus de 65 ans (y compris les personnes ne recevant pas de pension) en Belgique sont de 39 % supérieures à celles des femmes du même âge. Sur les seuls pensionnés, l'écart du montant perçu est de 27 %.
Note : le GGP (*Gender Gap in Pension*) mesure la différence entre la pension brute moyenne des hommes de 65 ans ou plus et celle des femmes de 65 ans ou plus (y compris les personnes ne recevant pas de pension). Le PGGP (*Pensioners' Gender Gap in Pension*) représente l'écart de pension des pensionnés masculins et des pensionnées féminines de 65 ans ou plus.
Source : Betti et al. [2015], d'après les données Eurostat 2011.

These differences are mainly explained by the pension gap among retired people aged 65 or more with old age insurance, with different rates of old age coverage in fact changing little. Indeed, the countries with the greatest gender pension gap – Germany (with 44%), then the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France – are those in which men and women benefit from similar or even identical rates of old age insurance.

Attached family entitlements and marital rights reduce the pension gap

In most European countries retirement schemes include corrective measures to adjust for the gender gap in resources for older men and women. These measures, which supplement direct entitlement pensions with family entitlements (linked to the number of children) or marital rights (reversionary pensions linked to marital status), help to reduce the gender pension gap.

However, in spite of these measures there is a positive correlation between the relative gender pension gap and the number of children that women have. In most cases the effect is linear : the greater the number of children, the lower mothers' pensions are in relation to those of men (whether they have children or not). This is particularly the case in France and Italy, where the average pension for women without children is nearly 20% lower than that for men, more than 30% lower for mothers of 1 or 2 children, and more than 40% for mothers of 3 or more children. In the Netherlands and Belgium, the average pension for women without children is close to that of men, whereas it is lower for mothers of one or several children.

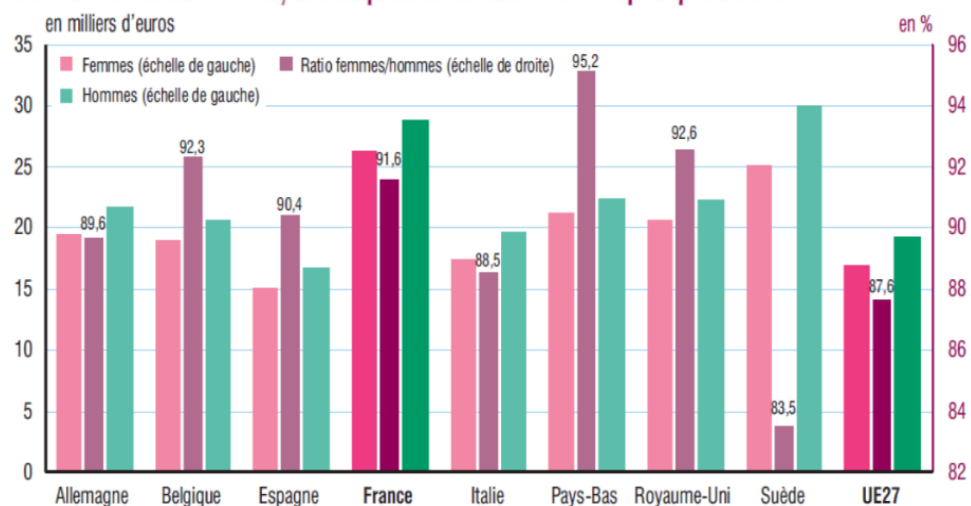
The gap in standard of living is smaller than the pension gap

Standard of living takes into account the pooling of resources by couples, so that differences in standard of living between retired men and women are mainly due to pensioners living without their spouses, especially widows. All in all, in 2014 in the European Union, the average standard of living for women aged 65 or more was 87.6% of that for men, and these differences between countries were less significant than for the gender pension gap.

A higher rate of poverty for elderly women

Women aged 65 or more, and especially those aged 75 or more, are more exposed to poverty than men in the same age groups. On average in 2014 in the European Union, the rate of female poverty was 4.5 points higher than that of men for people aged 65 or more, and more than 6 points higher for those aged 75 or more.

Niveau de vie annuel moyen des personnes de 65 ans ou plus par sexe en 2014



Champ : personnes âgées de 65 ans ou plus. Lecture : en Allemagne, en 2014, le niveau de vie annuel moyen des femmes de 65 ans ou plus est de 19 462 euros, soit 89,6 % du niveau de vie moyen des hommes de 65 ans ou plus.
Source : Eurostat, enquête EU-SILC 2014.

Men and women receive different legal treatment by the judicial system at all levels of procedure. The further up the legal system, the lower the rate of feminisation: from 18% of those charged to 15% of perpetrators receiving a criminal justice response, 10% of those prosecuted before a court and less than 4% of the prison population. This difference in legal treatment, which appears to be more lenient towards women, is based in part on the nature of the offence committed (female delinquency is generally less violent), the complexity of the case (less so on average for women) and the perpetrator's delinquent past (women are only half as likely as men to have a criminal record).

Women more likely to be implicated in dismissed cases

Public prosecutors must first of all determine whether the criminal case referred to them is likely to go through to prosecution or not. Gender differences in legal treatment can be seen as early on as this first examination. In 2014, 37% of presumed female perpetrators were considered non-prosecutable (for example in the case of an insufficiently characterised offence) and their case was dismissed as a result, compared with 26% of men. If the case is prosecutable, the public prosecution decides on the need for a criminal justice response. For 13% of women implicated in prosecutable cases (8% of men), the government ministry closed the case for reasons of inappropriateness (mainly due to the low seriousness of the offence). People whose cases are not closed are the subject of a criminal justice response. Among them, 15% are women compared with 18% of people initially implicated.

Fewer female prosecutions and more alternative measures for women

A criminal justice response can take three forms: prosecution before an examining or trial court, settlement, or the implementation of an alternative measure to prosecution. The most significant gender differences occur in the type criminal justice response.

In 2014, 60% of criminal justice responses for women (41% for men) took the form of alternative measures to prosecution (reminder of the law, paying damages to the victim, regularisation etc.). 35% of women and 53% of men were prosecuted before an examining or trial court. As an intermediate option between prosecution and alternative measures, settlement (fine or obligations) essentially concerns the same proportion of male and female perpetrators (5 to 6%).

Lower rate of sentencing and lighter sentences for women

As a consequence of this lower rate of prosecution, only 10% of people sentenced by a criminal court in 2014 were women.

There is also a difference in sentences given. Women are half as likely as men to receive a prison sentence which is partly including imprisonment and partly suspended (10% of sentences given, compared with 23% for men).

Répartition des peines prononcées selon le sexe du condamné en 2014

	en %	
	Femmes	Hommes
Emprisonnement avec partie ferme	10,4	23,4
Moins de 3 mois	3,4	5,8
De 3 mois à moins de 6 mois	3,2	7,5
De 6 mois à moins d'un an	2,0	5,6
Un an ou plus	1,8	4,5
Emprisonnement avec sursis total	34,6	27,8
Simple	26,5	18,0
Avec mise à l'épreuve	7,1	8,2
Travail d'intérêt général (TIG)	1,0	1,6
Amende	42,0	36,3
dont avec sursis total	5,5	1,6
Peine de substitution	11,4	11,9
Dispense de peine	1,6	0,6
Ensemble	100,0	100,0

Champ : France, condamnations du tribunal correctionnel en 2014.
Source : SDSE, exploitation statistique du Casier judiciaire national.

Conversely, women are more likely to receive a fully suspended prison sentence (35% against 28%) and, to a lesser extent, a fine (42% against 36%).

Differences occur within these sentence categories. The length of prison sentences with imprisonment is shorter for women, and fully suspended prison sentences are less often accompanied by a period of probation or community service.

Specific and less violent offences for women

A number of objective factors justify this apparently more lenient judicial treatment for female delinquents, starting with the nature of the offence. Female delinquency is indeed different to male delinquency. Women are under-represented in terms of road safety offences (11% of perpetrators compared with 18% for all offences) and drug offences (8%), but over-represented for invasion of privacy (26%), violation of dignity (23%) or family offences (46%) – and particularly those linked with the exercise of parental authority (63%).

Cases of property damage are a good example of the specificity of female delinquency, with a high level of feminisation in the order of 30% for simple theft and fraud or breach of confidence, but lower in more violent situations (13% for robbery with violence and for damage and destruction).

More alternative measures for women for damage to property or people

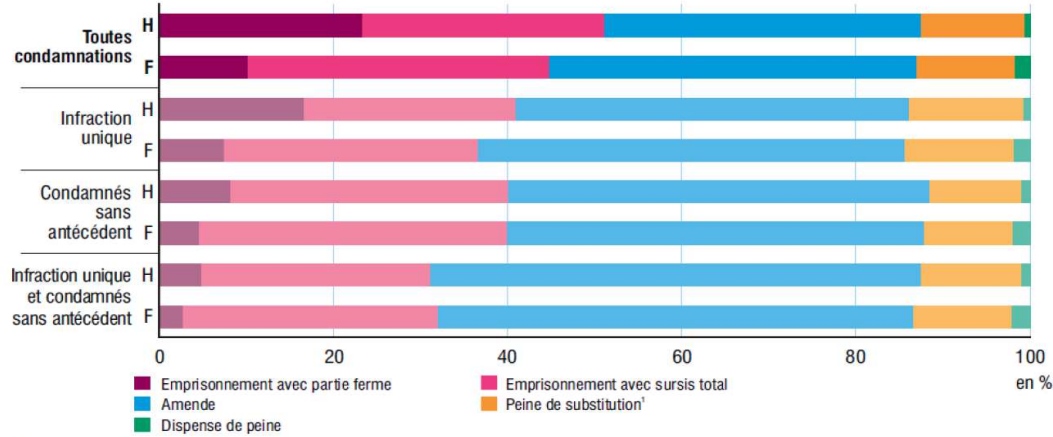
Gender differences in legal treatment are less significant depending on the type of offence committed, both in terms of proportions of prosecutable perpetrators and the type of criminal justice response. There are virtually no differences for drink driving, driving without a licence, drug use or parental authority claims. On the other hand, there are differences for other offences (white collar crime, property damage, acts of violence and contempt), with more alternative measures for women. The nature of the offence alone is not sufficient to explain all the differences in choices between the genders.

Less harsh sentences for convicted women

For perpetrators, there is other information available to help explain the sentence: the complexity of the case (obtained from the number of offences) and the perpetrator's delinquent past in terms of previous sentences. On average, 24% of sentences handed down against women by criminal courts in 2014 concerned several offences, compared with 30% for men. Furthermore, the proportion of sentenced women who already had a criminal record was 29%, which is half the proportion among sentenced men (55%).

Taking both these elements into account allows us to better understand the harsher sentences pronounced against men, but it does not fully explain the differences observed. Notably, the sentence for a single offence handed down against a person without a criminal record is half as likely to be a prison sentence for women than for men, the former being more often sentenced to a fully suspended prison sentence.

Structure des peines prononcées en 2014 selon les facteurs d'influence et le sexe du condamné



1. Y compris contrainte pénale.

Champ : France, condamnations du tribunal correctionnel 2014.

Source : SDSE, exploitation statistique du Casier judiciaire national.

Similar sentences for road traffic incidents and drug use, but less harsh for women guilty of damage to property or people

The nature of the offence also explains part of the gender differences observed in sentences pronounced. For offences that leave little margin for interpretation, such as road traffic incidents or drug use, convictions present roughly equivalent sentence structures, regardless of gender. On the other hand, clear differences can be observed for most other types of offence. For violence with a low level of seriousness, simple theft, breach of confidence or fraud, prison sentences are two to three times less likely to be handed down when the perpetrator is a woman, with fines being more common in these cases.

Overall, all other characteristics being equal, women are significantly less likely to be given harsher sentences. If we classify sentences into three categories from low to high in order of seriousness (alternative sentences to imprisonment – including fines – suspended prison sentences and prison sentences with imprisonment), female perpetrators are 30% less likely to receive a prison sentence with imprisonment than a suspended prison sentence, or a suspended prison sentence rather than an alternative sentence. At all levels in the judicial system, the perpetrator's personality or the seriousness of the offence without doubt also play a role, but this information is not available in administrative data.

Social roles of men and women. The enduring idea of a maternal vocation for women despite the decline in adherence to gender stereotypes

p.81 of the publication

French society bears traces of deep-seated differences between men and women regarding the carrying out of domestic chores, professions exercised and social roles in general. But women are not described as being less competent or less inclined to carry out certain activities than men. Conversely, as shown in the analysis of our three recent surveys,¹ there is an enduring idea of the female “parental vocation”, according to which women have superior parenting skills and are more disposed to perform these tasks: one in two people considers that mothers are better able to respond to the needs and expectations of children than fathers. Women reject these gender stereotypes more often than men. Overall, belief in these ideas has diminished: in 2014 only 22% of people interviewed subscribed to the model of the housewife, compared to 43% in 2002.

Generally equivalent abilities for both genders for the majority of the population

In 2014, the large majority of people interviewed considered that women were just as scientifically or mathematically minded (87% and 78% respectively) as men. Eight out of ten people stated they would trust a man to look after a child in a crèche just as much as a woman. Three out of four people rejected the idea that men may naturally have more authority than women.

54% of people interviewed believed that the imbalance in the distribution of professions was the result of advice given to girls and boys. A larger proportion (63%) said the reason that girls participated less in sporting competitions was that they received less encouragement to do so, rather than as a result of a lack of interest in competition (12%).

Opinions sur les capacités intellectuelles et les compétences professionnelles des femmes et des hommes

	en %		
	Femmes	Hommes	Ensemble
Part des personnes plutôt d'accord avec la proposition...			
« Les filles ont autant l'esprit scientifique que les garçons » (1)	87	87	87
« Un homme n'a pas naturellement plus d'autorité qu'une femme » (2)	76	75	75
« Les hommes n'ont pas un cerveau plus apte que celui des femmes au raisonnement mathématique » (2)	76	80	78
« Vous feriez autant confiance à un homme qu'à une femme pour s'occuper d'enfants en crèche » (2)	88	76	82
« Vous feriez autant confiance à une femme pilote de ligne qu'à un homme » (2)	93	96	94

Champ : France métropolitaine ; personnes de 18 ans ou plus (1), personnes de référence des ménages et conjoints (2).

Sources : Drees, Baromètre d'opinion, 2014 (1) ; Insee, enquête de conjoncture auprès des ménages (Cammé), plate-forme Opinions sur la place des hommes et des femmes dans la société, septembre 2014 (2).

¹ Le Baromètre d'opinion de la Drees, the household economic outlook survey (Cammé) carried out by INSEE and the International Social Survey Programme coordinated by the GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences

The “housewife” model is still adhered to by one in five people

For families with a child of preschool age, more than eight in ten people interviewed advocated limited participation in the labour market for women regarding the division of tasks, with total withdrawal for one in four people, and partial for six in ten. In the case of families with older children, preferences still often tended to favour withdrawal from the labour market for the mother (46%) even if, as in almost all cases, it was just a partial withdrawal. More generally, one in five people considered that, “ideally”, women should stay at home.

This support for the model of the housewife seems to result from the enduring idea of women’s “parental vocation”. Nearly four in ten people interviewed (37%) believed that “what women really want is a house and children” and half considered that mothers responded better to children’s needs than fathers. In comparison to heterosexual couples, male couples are less likely to be considered able to raise children than female couples (42% against 36%) : the absence of a mother would appear to be considered more harmful to the child’s development.

Women are much less disposed to gender stereotypes than men

Women are more likely to contest the idea that staying at home is just as satisfying as working for a wage (48% compared 38% of men) or that what most women really want is “to have a house and a child” (44% against 38%). They are half as likely to consider men less able to look after a child in a crèche than women (11% against 23%), and more likely to disapprove of the idea that mothers respond better than fathers to children’s needs (52% against 43%).

Opinions en matière de division sexuée du travail

	en %		
	Femmes	Hommes	Ensemble
Dans l’idéal, les femmes devraient rester à la maison pour élever leurs enfants (1)			
Plutôt d’accord	19	24	22
Plutôt pas d’accord	81	76	78
Ne se prononce pas	0	0	0
Le rôle d’un homme, c’est de gagner l’argent du ménage ; le rôle d’une femme, c’est de s’occuper de la maison et de la famille (2)			
Plutôt d’accord	10	16	12
Ni d’accord ni pas d’accord	14	15	14
Plutôt pas d’accord	77	70	74
Si les deux parents sont dans la même situation professionnelle et peuvent bénéficier d’un congé parental rémunéré, comment devrait-il être partagé ? (2)			
La mère devrait prendre la totalité et le père ne devrait pas du tout en prendre	12	17	15
La mère devrait prendre la plus grande partie	36	40	38
Le père et la mère devraient prendre chacun la moitié du temps de congé	51	43	47
Le père devrait prendre la plus grande partie	0	0	0
Le père devrait prendre la totalité et la mère ne devrait pas du tout en prendre	0	0	0

Champ : France métropolitaine ; personnes de 18 ans ou plus

Sources : Drees, Baromètre d’opinion, 2014 (1) ; GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, International Social Survey Programme : Family and Changing Gender Roles IV - ISSP 2012 (2)

Age, level of qualification and religiosity: determining factors in the degree of support for gender stereotypes

Overall adherence to gender stereotypes increases with age in the earlier phases of adult life and especially between the age groups of 60-69 and 70 or older. Conversely, belief in these stereotypes tends to decrease as the level of qualifications increases, as well as among the higher socioeconomic categories. On the other hand, it increases with the degree of religiosity.

An overall drop in adherence to gender division at work, in particular between pre- and post-war generations

A large proportion of the effect of age on the level of adhesion to gender stereotypes comes from the opinions expressed by older categories, differentiating 60-year-olds – born in the decade following the end of the second world war – from previous generations. This historical turning point marked the birth of a generation with higher levels of qualification and of female participation in the labour market, as well as a decrease in religiosity. Adherence to gender stereotypes has dropped overall over the past few years. For example, in 2014, 22% of people interviewed subscribed to the model of the housewife, compared with 43% in 2002.

The progress made in allocating women less to the domestic sphere is nevertheless limited and ambivalent, in that it has been accompanied by the development of a “double working day” for women and the endurance of the idea of a specific female “parental vocation”.

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INSEE and official statistics

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INSEE is...

A General Directorate of the Ministry for the Economy and Finance with locations throughout France, whose staff are government employees. INSEE operates under government accounting rules and receives its funding from the State's general budget.

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INSEE coordinates the work of the official statistical service

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The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques) - INSEE – was created by the Budget Law of 27 April 1946 (Art. 32 and 33). This new institution took over responsibility for public statistics, work that had been carried out continuously since 1833.

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- Methodology, Statistical Coordination and International Relations Directorate
- Business Statistics Directorate
- Demographic and Social Statistics Directorate
- Economic Studies and National Accounts Directorate
- Dissemination and Regional Action Directorate

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