Gender and its Relationship to Occupational Safety and Health

Margaret M. Kitt, MD, MPH
Deputy Director
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Background

• Women constitute 42% of the global working population; about 50% in developed countries
  ✓ Children born to working mothers in the US: more than doubled in the past 40 years from 31% to 72%
• On average in the EU-27 in 2010, 45% of all workers were women
• Women are under-represented in management, and professions with decision-making opportunities
Gender and Education (US)

Percent of Men and Women with College Degrees

- Men > 25: 25% in 1990, 30% in 2013
- Women > 25: 15% in 1990, 20% in 2013

Weekly Earnings by Educational Level for Women (2013)

- High School: $600
- Associate's Degree: $800
- Bachelor's Degree: $1200

Educational Degree
Gender Representation in Sectors

• Women more likely to be employed in service work while men dominate jobs associated with heavy machinery

• Majority of women work in healthcare and social services, retail, education, public administration, business activities and hotels and restaurants

• Male workers are concentrated in fields of construction, public administration, retail, business activities, agriculture and land transport
Gender and Earnings by Country

Gender Wage Gap (%) by Country, 2010

United Kingdom
Switzerland
Sweden
Japan
Iceland
Germany
France
Australia
United States
Differences in Exposures

• Women more often exposed to sexual harassment and monotonous work than men
• Men tend to have more exposure to noise, vibrations, extreme temperatures, chemicals and heavy lifting
• Female jobs more likely to have high demands and low job control; these stressors are associated with cardiovascular, mental and musculoskeletal outcomes
• Heavy lifting, working at night, and exposure to reproductive toxicants may affect women more than men, especially during pregnancy
Job Tasks and Equipment

Differences in shape and average body sizes between men and women → tools and equipment designed for men are often unsuitable for women.
Gender differences in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- PPE designed for men, so sizing is often too big and not protective for women
- Very few considerations for pregnancy in design
  - Goggles, gloves, boots, lab coats

Occupational Health Outcome Inequalities

• Women more likely
  – To be victims of workplace violence, especially sexual or psychological
  – To have occupational disease, such as musculoskeletal diseases and adverse reproductive effects
  – To have work-related fatigue, repetitive strain injury, infections and mental health problems

• Men more likely
  – To have fatal and non-fatal workplace accidents
  – To be victims of physical assault
Work/Life Balance

• Childcare and eldercare arrangements
• Household activities
• Financial resources
• Leave policies
• Predictability and type of work schedules
• Flexibility in working hours and telework
Gender-sensitive policies

• Policies need to address gender-specific hazard protection without restricting women’s access to jobs, including alternative duty policies
• Similar protection should be extended to men and women workers who are planning a child
• Breastfeeding mothers
• Family friendly policies
Maternity leave

Guaranteed paid weeks of maternity leave around the world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Weeks of Leave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD, gov.uk

Deseret News Graphic
Data Gaps/Research Needs

- Future research needs to include unpaid employment and domestic work, using a more holistic approach.
- Data on occupational injuries and illnesses by gender: research should adjust for working hours (weekly work hours differ by gender).
- Most toxicological data come from male workers; thus occupational exposure limits were based on the average healthy young male.
- More research needed on male reproductive health outcomes.
- Women have been underreported in CVD studies.
Questions?