

Directions: *There are 2 passages in this section. Each passage is followed by some questions or unfinished statements. For each of them there are four choices marked A), B), C) and D). You should decide on the best choice and mark the corresponding letter on Answer Sheet 2 with a single line through the centre.*

Passage Two

Questions 51 to 55 are based on the following passage.

Women have historically been paid less. But in the US in the 1980s, they began to catch up—fast. During that decade, the gender pay gap closed by about one percentage point a year. Had that trend continued, the gender wage gap would have been closed by 2017.

But the trend didn't continue, and the gap remains yawning.

According to a new study from academics at Harvard, the stagnation can be put down, perhaps counterintuitively, to the introduction of state and federal family leave policies.

The academics argue that during the 1990s, as governments began to introduce leave policies, it was mainly women who took advantage of them. Though the leave policies might have helped those women to stay in the workplace—instead of dropping out to have families—those who returned saw their wages had increased at lower rates than the men.

After family leave was introduced in the US, in fact, the rate of gender wage convergence fell to just 0.03 percentage points per year, and has remained there ever since.

Those monitoring the process towards salary equity at work have long watched as progress slowed in many countries around the world. In fact, that progress began to reverse during the pandemic(大流行病).

The gender pay gap is one of the most outstanding examples of that lack of parity(平等), and still exists just about everywhere. The motherhood penalty has become a shorthand for describing why: In many places, especially rich countries, women earn the same as men until they reach their childbearing years. Women who have children begin to see their salaries slip behind their male counterparts.

Part of this is because women take on more of the unpaid labor at home, which can eat into time available for work and energy for career advancement. But it's also because mothers are passed over for raises and promotion, and because time out of the workplace sets women back, even if that time is taken voluntarily, and supported by company or government policy.

What would have happened if leave policies hadn't been introduced? The study doesn't go into that question, other than to say that if the 1980s trend continued, we would have been at parity by now.

It's possible, however, that the journey towards wage parity would have stalled either way. If women's gains in the 1980s were made through the erasure of things like bias, once those less uncontrollable problems had been addressed, there would still have been an issue with women—who are the ones to bear children and take care of them in the early weeks because of biological factors like the ability to breastfeed, forcing them to take breaks, whether or not those breaks were mandated.

51. What do we learn about the gender pay gap in the US during the 1980s?
- A) It was being slowly closed.
 - B) It was shrinking rapidly.
 - C) It started to yawn.
 - D) It remained substantial.
52. What happened with the introduction of state and federal family leave policies?
- A) The process towards salary equity at work began to reverse.
 - B) The rate of gender wage convergence started to fall noticeably.
 - C) The trend of women returning to work after childbirth started.
 - D) The narrowing of the gender pay gap attracted more attention.
53. What partly accounts for the slip in women's salaries?
- A) The insufficient motivation women generally have for career advancement.
 - B) The opportunities numerous women give up for pay raise and promotion.
 - C) The huge amounts of time and energy women spend taking care of the family.
 - D) The lack of policy support from government and business corporations.
54. What does the new study say about wage parity?
- A) It would have stalled if those controllable problems had not been addressed.
 - B) It would have halted if company and government had not worked together.
 - C) It would have been achieved with the complete erasure of gender biases.
 - D) It would have been attained with the continuation of the 1980s trend.
55. What prevents women from achieving parity with men in the final analysis?
- A) Ignoring biases against women in the workplace.
 - B) Giving birth to children and taking care of them.
 - C) Failing to mandate breaks for childbirth and care.
 - D) Lacking resources to address biological problems.