

Houston Area Model United Nations Standard Committee

CSW



Chair | Yumn Qazi
Topic A: Feminization of Poverty
Houston Area Model United Nations 49
February 1 & 2, 2024

Note to Delegates

Delegates,

Welcome to HAMUN 49! My name is Yumn Qazi and I am in my junior year at the University of Houston. I am majoring in Psychology and minoring in Business Administration.

I first joined MUN in seventh grade because my sister encouraged me to join and I am so glad she did. I have been to many conferences, such as THIMUN-Qatar, when I used to live in Doha, Qatar. I staffed HAMUN 48 as vice chair of UNEP. For HAMUN 49, I am co-chair of CSW and serving as Deputy Director General.

Commission on the Status of Women was first created in 1975. This is an important committee because it works on the protection of women rights and promoting gender equality globally. There are still many injustices women face globally. The two topics are the feminization of poverty and the protection of women incarcerated.

I encourage everyone to take the opportunity to speak and state their stance on the issues. It may seem scary at first but everyone is learning. Don't be afraid to ask your chairs questions because we are here to help!

Yumn Qazi

Co-Chair of CSW

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History of the CSW

The history of the Commission on the Status of Women can be traced back to the early days of the United Nations. The Commission convened its inaugural meeting in February 1947, shortly following the establishment of the United Nations, in Lake Success, New York. In its initial years, the CSW primarily focused on women's political rights and participation. However, as the global women's movement gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, the CSW's mandate expanded to encompass a broader range of issues, including economic, social, and cultural aspects of women's rights. In 1975, the Commission organized the first World Conference on Women in Mexico City, marking a significant milestone for the global women's rights movement. This conference led to the adoption of the World Plan of Action, which set the stage for further international efforts to promote gender equality.

The Commission on the Status of Women has been instrumental in advocating for women's rights and gender equality on a global scale.

It continues to be a driving force in the pursuit of a more equitable world, fostering dialogue, promoting policy changes, and raising awareness of the challenges and opportunities in the quest for gender equality. Its work is essential in ensuring that women's voices are heard and that their rights are protected and upheld at the international level.



Commission meeting in 1947

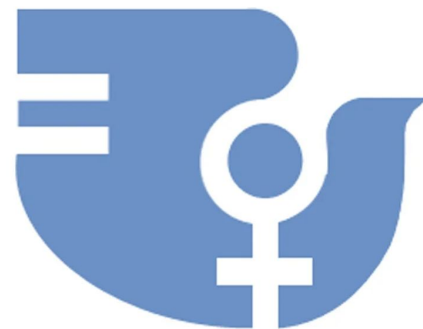
Topic A: Feminization of Poverty

The feminization of poverty is a concept that underscores the disproportionate impact of poverty on women compared to men. This phenomenon is rooted in various socio-economic and gender-related factors. Women across the world often face systemic barriers that limit their access to education, job opportunities, and economic resources.

Discriminatory practices in the workplace, unequal pay for equal work, and a lack of affordable childcare facilities can contribute to women's economic vulnerability. Furthermore, women frequently bear the brunt of caregiving responsibilities, which can limit their ability to participate in the workforce, leading to lower income and financial dependence. This gendered dimension of poverty highlights the interconnectedness of gender inequality and economic disparity, underscoring the need for policies and initiatives that address these....

...disparities and empower women economically.

Efforts to combat the feminization of poverty require a multi-faceted approach. This includes promoting gender equality in the workplace, ensuring equal pay for equal work, providing affordable childcare and parental leave options, and addressing social and cultural norms that perpetuate gender disparities. Additionally, investment in women's education and skills development can help break the cycle of poverty. By recognizing the unique challenges that women face in poverty and implementing policies that target these issues, societies can work towards reducing the feminization of poverty and creating a more equitable and just economic landscape for all.

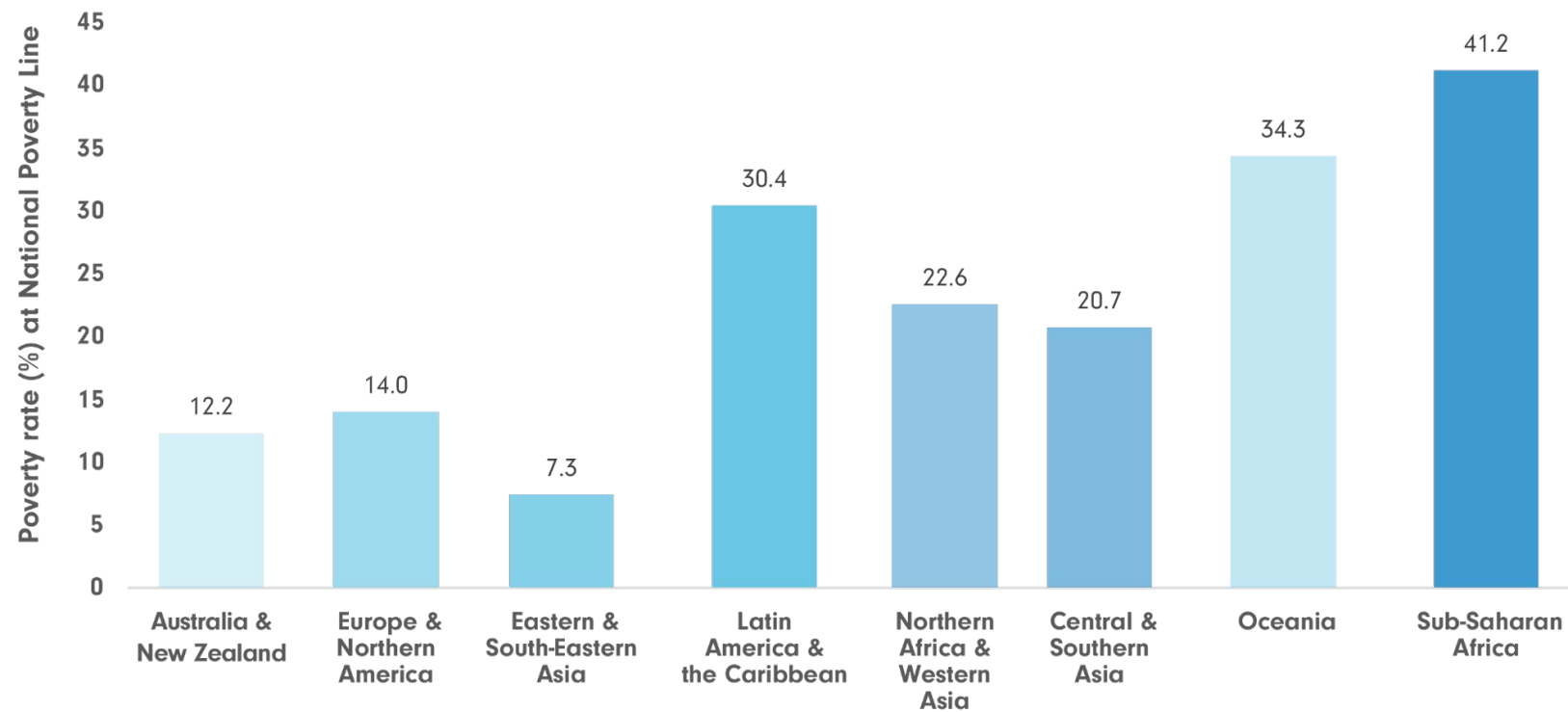


UN Commission on the
Status of Women

The industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries led to a significant shift in the nature of work. As men increasingly migrated to factories and waged labor, women's roles were often relegated to domestic work and caregiving, which limited their access to economic opportunities. This marked the early stages of gender-based economic disparities. With men increasingly engaged in wage-earning work, women's roles shifted towards unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities. This gendered division of labor meant that women were less likely to participate in the formal economy and often depended on the income of male family members. Women's work, while critical to the functioning of households and the broader economy, was devalued and remained unpaid or underpaid. As the industrial era progressed, women's economic autonomy eroded. They became economically dependent on the male breadwinners in their families, which made them vulnerable to economic shocks, such as unemployment or illness of the male wage-earner. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the first waves of feminism emerged, advocating for women's rights and gender equality. These movements laid the groundwork for later discussions about gender disparities in various societal domains, including economic empowerment.

After World War II, women in many Western countries joined the workforce in large numbers to fill the void left by men who were at war. This marked a significant shift in women's economic participation. However, despite their contributions to the war effort and the workforce, women often faced discrimination and were paid less than men for similar work. The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of the second wave of feminism, which highlighted gender inequalities and discrimination in all aspects of life, including the workplace. This period played a crucial role in raising awareness about the feminization of poverty.





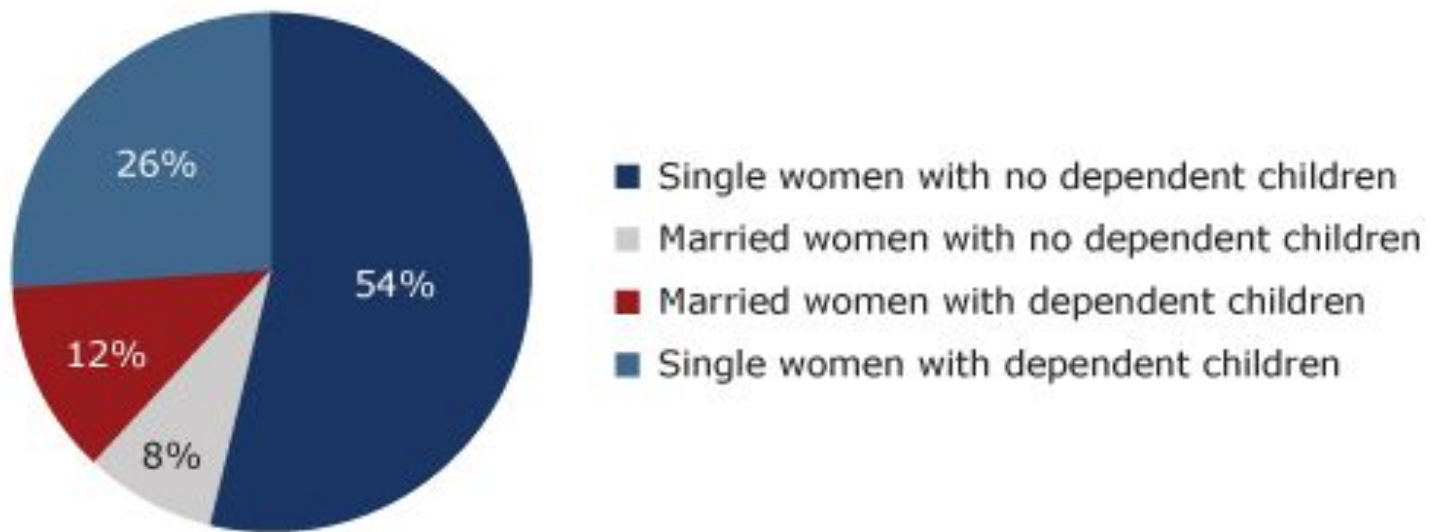
In North America and Western Europe, while there have been significant advancements in women's rights and gender equality, gender pay gaps persist, and women often bear the brunt of unpaid caregiving responsibilities. This leads to a greater risk of economic vulnerability, especially for single mothers. The absence of comprehensive paid family leave policies and the high cost of childcare further exacerbate these challenges, pushing women into poverty or perpetuating their economic dependence.

In sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia, the feminization of poverty is more pronounced due to a combination of factors, including limited access to education and economic opportunities for women, as well as high rates of maternal mortality and gender-based violence. Women in these regions often work in informal and low-paying sectors, lacking access to essential resources such as healthcare and financial services. Additionally, women's land and property rights are frequently undermined, leaving them economically disempowered. The intersection of gender inequality with other issues like conflict and displacement further deepens poverty among women, making it a pressing concern for international development efforts. Addressing the feminization of poverty in each region requires region-specific strategies that consider the unique social, cultural, and economic contexts while also addressing common global challenges such as gender discrimination and unequal access to resources.



Case Example: United States of America

Women in poverty: family composition of household



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey, 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement*.

According to the Center for American Progress, The disparity in poverty rates between women and men becomes notably more pronounced from ages 18 to 24, with 20.6 percent of women experiencing poverty at that stage, in contrast to 14.0 percent of men. Although the gap diminishes as individuals progress through adulthood, it never completely disappears, and, notably, it more than doubles during the elderly years.

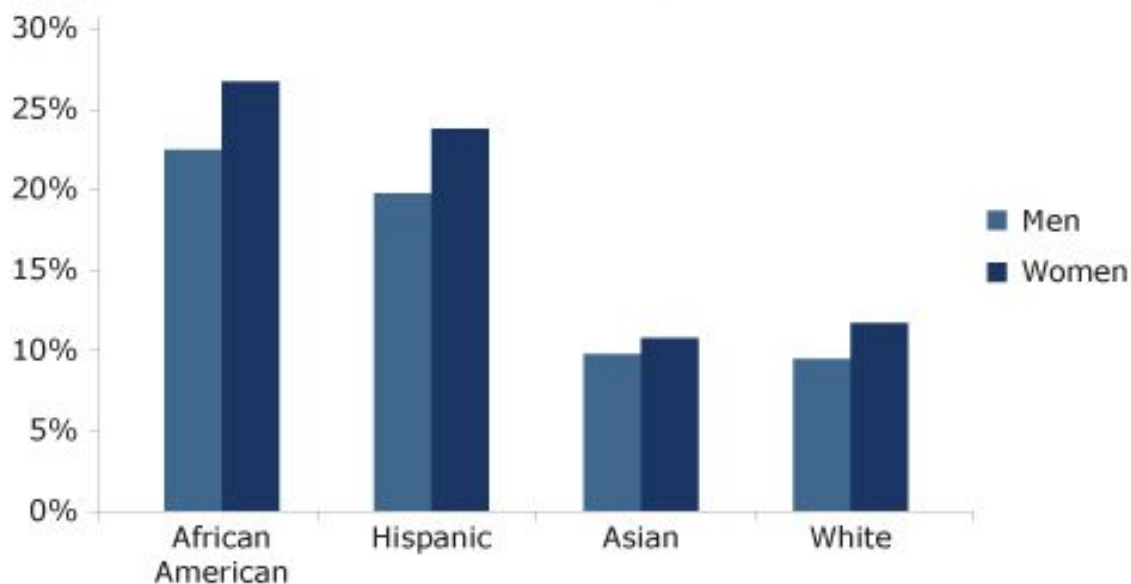


Case Example: United States of America

In the United States, single mothers constitute a prime example of the feminization of poverty. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a significant number of households headed by single mothers experience high rates of poverty. The challenges they face are influenced by various factors, including gender-based wage disparities, limited access to affordable childcare, and a lack of paid family leave policies. Single mothers often earn less than their male counterparts or women in dual-income households due to the gender pay gap. In the absence of a second income, they are more vulnerable to financial instability and poverty. Limited access to education and job opportunities further exacerbates this issue.

Across all racial and ethnic groups, women face a higher poverty rate compared to men. Updated statistics reveal that poverty affects 26.5 percent of African American women, while the figure for African American men stands at 22.3 percent. Similarly, 23.6 percent of Hispanic women experience poverty, while the rate among Hispanic men is 19.6 percent. The disparity continues among Asian populations, with 10.7 percent of Asian women living in poverty in contrast to 9.7 percent of Asian men. Among white individuals, 11.6 percent of women experience poverty, while 9.4 percent of men in the same group face economic hardship.

Percentage of men and women in poverty by race/ethnicity



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey, 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement*.

Questions to consider

- Are there policies in place to combat workplace discrimination and harassment and promote women's advancement in the workforce?
- How can we make quality child care more accessible and affordable to help women balance work and caregiving responsibilities?
- What policies can be implemented to promote women's access to higher-paying and traditionally male-dominated fields?
- What measures can be taken to support families, particularly single mothers, in their efforts to escape poverty?
- How can higher education for women be achieved so they can attain higher paying jobs?
- Are there programs that provide mentorship and support for women in business and leadership roles?
- How do other factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability intersect with gender in the experience of poverty?
- What strategies can be developed to combat gender-based violence, which can often lead to women falling into poverty?
- How can societal attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender discrimination be challenged and changed?
- How can we address the differing challenges faced by rural and urban women when it comes to access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities?
- How can we address the particular challenges faced by elderly women who may be living in poverty?
- What initiatives can be implemented to encourage girls and women to pursue STEM and other high-earning fields?



Sources

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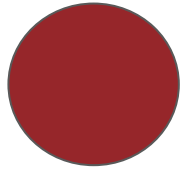
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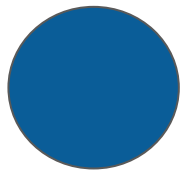
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