

Debunking the Narrative on Women in STEM and Business

Across the globe, [governments](#) are removing [legal barriers](#) to women joining the workforce. At the same time, many companies and governments are pushing for equal numbers of women and men in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and entrepreneurship.

But despite their seeming similarities, these two situations couldn't be more different. One unleashes untapped creative potential and enriches society. The other wastes resources in a fight against biology. Here's the evidence.

Equal Opportunity for Women

Giving women equal opportunity to join the workforce can help pull countries from poverty and grow economies. For example, economists [estimate](#) that expanding female employment in India could spur economic growth by 2.4 percent. This might seem like a small figure, but 2.4 percent growth can actually result in considerable gains. Additionally, in Africa, agricultural output would increase by [20 percent](#) if women had equal access to agricultural inputs.

Apart from economic growth, female empowerment is linked to positive social outcomes. For instance, because women invest a higher proportion of their earnings into family and community matters, including them in the labor force puts a dent in [poverty](#) rates.

Indeed, unjust discrimination is costly for [businesses](#) and the broader economy. Companies that refuse to hire applicants based on traits like sex and [race](#) ultimately limit their growth.

It's clear that liberated women make an immense contribution

to society. Yet, policies to intensify their participation in science and entrepreneurship are often futile.

Why Women Aren't in STEM or Entrepreneurship

Despite [government](#) and [corporate](#) programs to get women into STEM, men still [outnumber](#) women in these fields. Even [Google](#) grudgingly admits that there has been little progress for women in its [workforce](#). And we shouldn't be surprised.

Most of these programs assume that men and women have the same goals, interests, or personalities. But study after study shows this simply isn't the case.

For instance, in contrast to women, men typically [prefer](#) to work with things rather than people. This means that men gravitate toward fields focused on things—like technology or hard sciences—and that women gravitate toward fields involving people—like teaching or nursing. Studies even posit that there are more men than women working in computer science because men are more [interested](#) in the field.

Even rates of scientific invention are influenced by personality differences. The confidence of a man is less likely to be shattered due to rejection. As a result, men are less willing to quit after failure. Much of the gender disparity in patenting is [attributable](#) to the resilience of perseverant men.

Similarly, the gender gap in entrepreneurship is a function of [personality differences](#). The success of women like Estée Lauder and Melanie Perkins demonstrates that women can be as entrepreneurially exceptional as men or even better, but the profile of the average woman is more relevant than the accomplishments of outliers. And on average, [men](#) are more likely to have entrepreneurial intentions than women and start larger and more durable [businesses](#).

Additionally, women are not as [overconfident](#) and [risk tolerant](#) as men. Therefore, on average, women are less entrepreneurial, considering that entrepreneurship correlates with these traits. Women are also more motivated by [social](#) goals than creating economic value, so they might be less inclined to establish financial behemoths.

The evidence is clear: [Men and women are different](#), so they will make different decisions. Policymakers and companies ought to stop pretending otherwise.

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