

Iceland's women leave work at 2.38pm to protest gender pay gap

Wage disparity means women all across Europe are essentially working for free

Charlotte England @charlottengland Tuesday 25 October 2016 10:29



Thousands of female employees across [Iceland](#) walked out of workplaces at 2.38pm on Monday to protest against earning [less than men](#).

Iceland is the best country in the world for [gender equality](#), yet women still earn on average [14 to 18 per cent](#) less than their male colleagues. According to unions and women's organisations, this means in every eight hour day women are essentially working without pay from 2.38pm.

In the Nordic country's capital, [Reykjavik](#), thousands of women gathered in central Austurvöllur square when they left the offices, shops, factories, and schools where they were supposed to be working. Similar but smaller protests are thought to have taken place around the country.

In 2005, women left work at 2.08pm — the minute they began working for free.

In 2008, it was 2.25pm.

In eleven years, less than three minutes has been gained annually towards eliminating the gender pay gap, English-language Icelandic news site [Grapevine](#) reported.

If progress continues at the same rate, it will take 52 years to eliminate the disparity between men and women's earnings in Iceland entirely.

Gylfi Arnbjörnsson, president of the Icelandic Confederation of Labor, told the country's official national broadcaster RÚV, that for 60 years it has been illegal in Iceland to discriminate on the basis of gender. Wage contracts can take into account education level and type of job, but not whether someone is male or female.

“No one puts up with waiting 50 years to reach a goal,” Mr Arnbjörnsson said. “It doesn't matter whether it's a gender pay gap or any other pay gap. It's just unacceptable to say we'll correct this in 50 years. That's a lifetime.”

Unfortunately, despite the large wage gap, women in Iceland actually fare quite well in the workplace compared to female workers in many other parts of Europe. According to a recent survey which placed the wage gap in Iceland at only 14 per cent, women in the UK are earning nearly 20 per cent less than their male counterparts. This means women in Britain are essentially working for free everyday from 19 October until the end of the year.

A 26-year-old from Reykjavik who took part in the action pointed out how disheartening the statistics are.

She told [Refinery29](#): “We know that no country in the world has reached gender equality, but today reminds me that not even the country that's supposed to have the most equal rights pays women the same as men”.

Source: The Independent
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/iceland-women-protest-strike-gender-pay-gap-leave-work-early-a7378801.html>