

DECODING INEQUALITY

CHAMPIONING INCOME EQUITY
THROUGH INNOVATIVE RESEARCH



As the chasm between the affluent and the less fortunate continues to expand, the pressing need to grasp and confront this issue grows increasingly urgent.

"Income inequity, a global phenomenon, has profound implications on societal stability and justice"

explains Prof. Tali Kristal, head of the Income Inequity Lab.

Kristal's journey into the heart of wage inequity research began with a simple question: why are wages rising for some and stagnating for others? The answer, she discovered, isn't a one-size-fits-all explanation. Technology, often blamed for job losses and income disparity, is just one piece of the puzzle. Kristal argues that a country's social and political landscape plays a crucial role. Strong labor unions and norms that prioritize fair pay can act as a buffer, ensuring that technological advancements benefit everyone, not just a select few.



Expanding the scope of research, Kristal contends that "A major gap in understanding income inequality exists because current research commonly studies the topic through the narrow prism of earnings and ignores other workplace factors like employee benefits, corporate profits and relative bargaining power." Drawing from a diverse background spanning labor studies, sociology, and economics, Prof. Kristal is pioneering a transformative methodology called "distributional workplace accounts" (DIWA). DIWA seeks to revolutionize the understanding of income by considering not only earnings, but also fringe benefits and capital for both employees and employers. Through DIWA, a comprehensive analysis of income distribution across various social and income classes becomes possible, ushering in a new era of insight into economic disparity. Kristal was recently awarded a prestigious ERC Consolidator Grant to advance this trailblazing research.

In her study focused on computers at the workplace, Prof. Kristal demonstrates that the benefits of using computers at work are not equal for men and women. Even though computers were supposed to help close the gender pay gap, the research suggests the opposite. The reason is that jobs that are traditionally done by women tend to see a minor if at all wage premium when computers are introduced, while jobs done by men tend to see a large wage increase. This is likely because society undervalues tasks typically done by women, and computers are seen as just another way to do those tasks. The study suggests that new technologies need to be introduced in a way that considers these social biases, and that more research is needed on how other new technologies like AI impact the gender pay gap.

Prof. Tali Kristal
Department of Sociology

In addition, she teamed up with Prof. Meir Yaish (Haifa Center on the Politics of Inequality) to show that during COVID, in cases where both parents were working from home, women shouldered most of the increased housework burden, especially those with young children. This came at a cost, as women lost more paid work hours than men. While working from home offers flexibility, it also reinforces traditional gender roles, leading women to do more housework and potentially hurting their careers. The study suggests that flexible work arrangements alone will not solve gender inequality unless we challenge assumptions about who does housework.



In a recent international research project, Kristal participated in a team investigating gender-pay inequality. Researchers from over 20 institutions across the globe, utilizing data from 15 countries including Israel, the U.S., France, Germany, Japan, and Sweden, revealed a persistent pay gap for women even in the same jobs as their male counterparts. These findings, published in *Nature Human Behavior*, highlight the ongoing need for equal-pay policies in the labor market.

As Prof. Kristal continues to challenge conventional wisdom and advocate for change, her work serves as a catalyst for meaningful progress in the ongoing struggle for economic justice and gender equality.



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