sneakher culture

The following series of infographics displays a summary of an immense amount of research focused on women's underrepresentation and gender inequality within sneaker culture. With sneakers being so influential in our society today, this study provides a specific lens and new perspective on women's representation and equality.

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general information about the industry for better understanding of the following infographics

2 **sneaker culture timeline**
definitive timeline of sneaker culture vs "sneaker**her**" culture, highlighting the differences

3 **significance of sports**
explanation of the ties that sneaker culture has to sports and gender inequality

4 **significance of hip-hop**
data regarding the connections between hip-hop, the industry, and gender imbalance

5 **women's sneakers**
proof that women have far less sneaker options than men, adding to the female exclusion

6 **women's representation**
statistics representing how men are clearly the face of the sneaker industry

7 **the gender pay gap**
the pay gap related to sneaker culture and how it relates to broader contexts

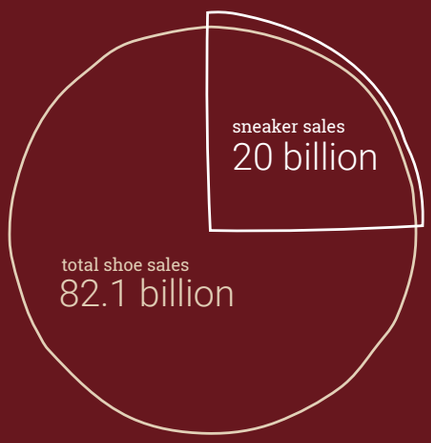
8 **role model importance**
the mental benefits of having role models that look like you + women's empowerment

9 **conclusion + work cited**
a general takeaway from all of the information, followed by sources

SNEAKER MARKET BASICS

market research that provides some context on how prominent sneakers are

market breakdown



the four main influences on sneaker culture, in addition to sneaker culture informing these areas

popularity by brand

based on online search terms

putting it into perspective

in order to get a better idea of how much money the sneaker industry makes:

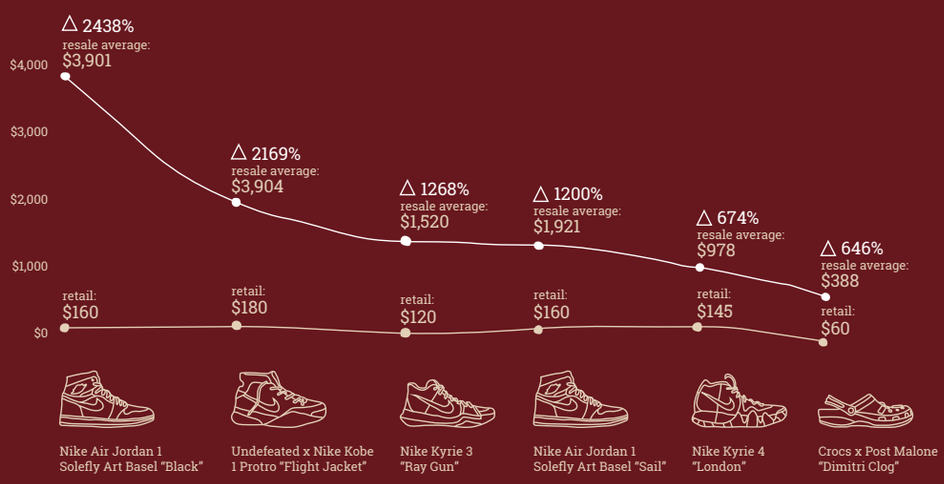
at Nike alone, there are
25 pairs sold
per second.

that adds up to
$100 million per day.

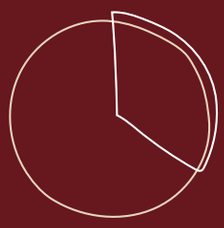
new sneaker sub-markets

in recent years, there have been distinct sub-markets emerge that play a key role in today's sneaker culture.

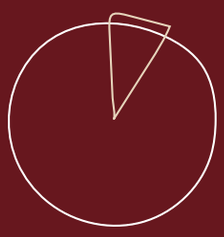
rise of resale



women in sneakers



women's sneaker sales increased 37% in the last year



while high heel sales dropped 11%

SNEAKER CULTURE TIMELINE

the definitive development of sneaker culture compared to women's sneaker history

sneaker culture

sneakher culture

the first ever "sneaker" was created by Converse

Honus Wagner becomes the first athlete to secure a sports endorsement contract

1900

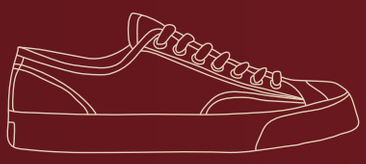
brands such as Reebok, Saucony and Converse became established: sneakers were on the rise

Converse launched the All Star basketball high top with Chuck Taylor, the first ever sports endorsement contract

1920

Dassler brothers launch Gebruder Dassler shoe company that would later become Adidas and Puma

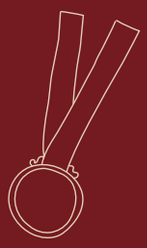
for the first time, women regularly and publicly participated in sports and leisure culture



women's athletic footwear was created, while maintaining "femininity" with a heeled rubber sole

Jack Purcell, badminton champion of the world, designed and delivered his line of sneakers

multi-sport Olympic athlete Babe Zaharias secured the first major female athlete endorsement contract



1940

Dassler brothers split up: Adi Dassler created Adidas while Rudolf Dassler created Puma

> **since the 1920's footwear endorsed [and worn] by female athletes has had little to no impact on sneaker culture . . . the majority of the most coveted sneakers are not made in women's sizes, to the frustration of female aficionados**
>
> **-Brooklyn Museum's exhibition, "The Rise of Sneaker Culture."**

almost all runners in the summer Olympics seen wearing Adidas shoes

1960

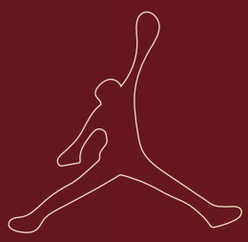
Phil Knight and Bill Bowerman create Nike

Adidas officially rebranded their tennis shoes after tennis player Stan Smith

Nike branding was created, paying just $35 for the logo

Title IX was established to provide equal access to any sport receiving federal financial assistance, allowing women to play sports in school

recreational jogging became more popular, sneaker companies started designing for the masses



1980

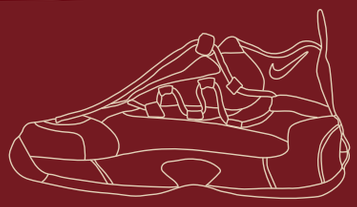
the Reebok Freestyle launched to accommodate for the extreme popularity of aerobics

Michael Jordan signs a endorsement deal with Nike to create a "larger than life" campaign

the first sneaker for women launched as a result of labor activism

the first Air Jordan 1 was released

rap music was becoming popular, exemplified by rap group Run-DMC who publicly supported Adidas



80% of sneakers were being worn outside of sports

sneaker prices rise, sneaker theft and violence becomes more frequent, sneakers start to be associated with violence

Sheryl Swoopes becomes the first woman to have a Nike signature shoe and only the second athlete to do so

the Jordan brand officially splits leaves Nike

the first ever women's Jordan sneaker dropped

Nike offered the first customizable sneakers to the masses with Nike ID

2000

Nikki McCray signed with Fila and launched the "Fila Nikki Delta" basketball shoe

the H-Town sneaker summit is founded

Vashtie Kola became the first woman to design a Jordan sneaker

Flight Club opens in New York City

Maya Moore became the first female to ever secure an endorsement deal with Jordan

the highest women's endorsement contract reached $29 million, compared to the highest men's endorsement contract for $78 million

Kanye West launches his first installment of his Yeezy line with Adidas, resulting in the biggest collab between a clothing brand and a non-athlete

Aleali May designed the first unisex Jordan sneaker

2020

SIGNIFICANCE OF SPORTS

athletics, specifically basketball, clearly play a large role in sneaker culture

sports impacting sneakers

based on the timeline above, sneakers have a direct tie to sports, considering most sneakers were created to serve one specific sport. therefore, as popularity in different sports changed over time, so did sneaker trends and styles.

1892 — the very first sneaker was created in order to provide an option for active footwear, mostly for running

1917 — in response to the increase of basketball popularity, Converse released the first ever basketball shoe

1935 — as more athletes started to play tennis, famous tennis player Jack Purcell released his own tennis shoe

1982 — aerobics gained extreme popularity in the 80's and Reebok responded with the launch of an aerobics sneaker

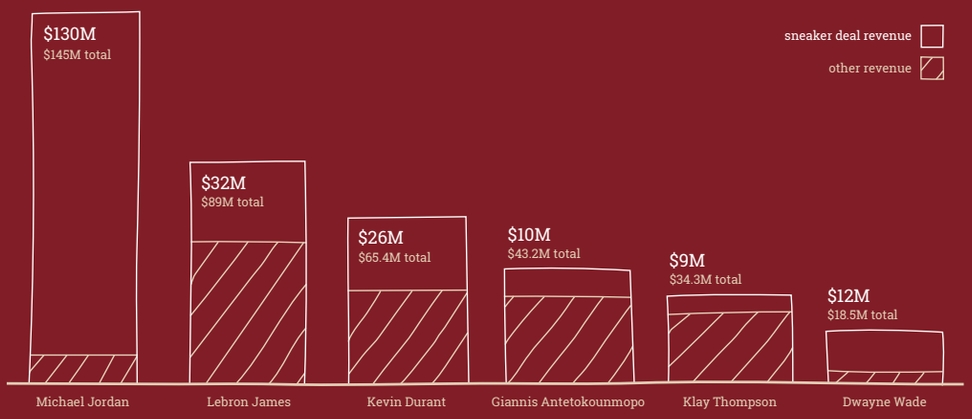
sneakers impacting sports

as sneakers became more popular, this cause and effect worked vice versa so that sneakers were effecting sports.

when the first Air Jordan 1 was released in 1985 in collaboration with Nike and Michael Jordan, Jordan wore the red and black sneakers in his NBA games to endorse them. at the time, the colors were against league regulations which resulted in $2000 fines for Jordan. however, he continued to rep his sneakers every game, giving the AJ1's a reputation of being rebellious and unique.

basketball shoe deals

with basketball arguably being the most influential sport to sneaker culture, shoe deals with basketball players create an immense amount of income. below are the annual revenues that top players receive from their shoe deals.



gender inequality

in every aspect of sports, from the players to team owners, there is a clear and constant imbalance between men and women in sports.

professional sports coaches

0/30
of NBA head coaches are women

4/12
of WNBA head coaches are women

0/32
of NFL head coaches are women

> **"I'm getting tired of the novelty of the 'first female'...when is it going to become the norm instead of the exception?... All these millions of girls that play sports across the country...wouldn't it be great if we could teach them to watch how women lead?"**
>
> **- Muffet McGraw, head coach of the women's basketball team at Notre Dame**

professional referees

one woman has been a referee in the NFL

three women have been referees in the NBA

zero women have been referees in the NHL

one woman has been an umpire in the MLB

four women have been referees in the WNBA

professional team owners

17% of NBA team owners are women

13% of NFL team owners are women

3% of NHL team owners are women

the faces of ESPN

SIGNIFICANCE OF HIP-HOP

how hip-hop and rap became a large influence on the sneaker industry, and vice versa

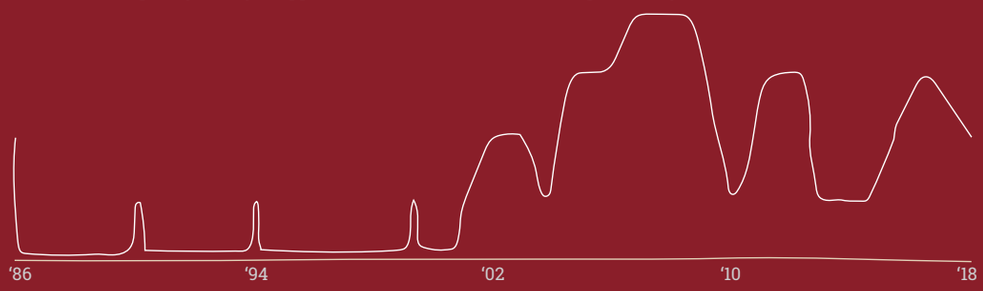
first impact

many attribute the start of the relationship between hip-hop and sneaker culture to the popular rap group from the 80's:

their hit song "My Adidas" lead to a sneaker endorsement and collaboration that opened the gate for future rappers, in addition to correlating hip-hop aesthetic to the sneaker world.

throughout time

after RUN DMC's collaboration, the hip-hop and rap industry became much more synonymous with sneakers, seen in the frequency of major rapper x sneaker collaborations throughout the years.



gender imbalance

the hip-hop industry has a clear history of excluding women from different aspects, including the overlap with sneaker culture.

2/36

of the most well known rapper x sneaker collaborations are with female rappers

8/50

of the most popular rap and hip-hop songs of the decade are by female artists

2/20

of the highest paid rappers and hip-hop artists are female

> **"You know, I never [signed a female rapper] because I always thought, like, I would end up fucking a female rapper and fucking the business up. I'm so focused on my business. I just, I gotta be honest with you. You know, she looking good. I'm spending so much money on her photo shoots. I gotta fuck a couple times."**
>
> **-Rick Ross, head of Maybach Music Group and rapper in his interview with "The Breakfast Club"**

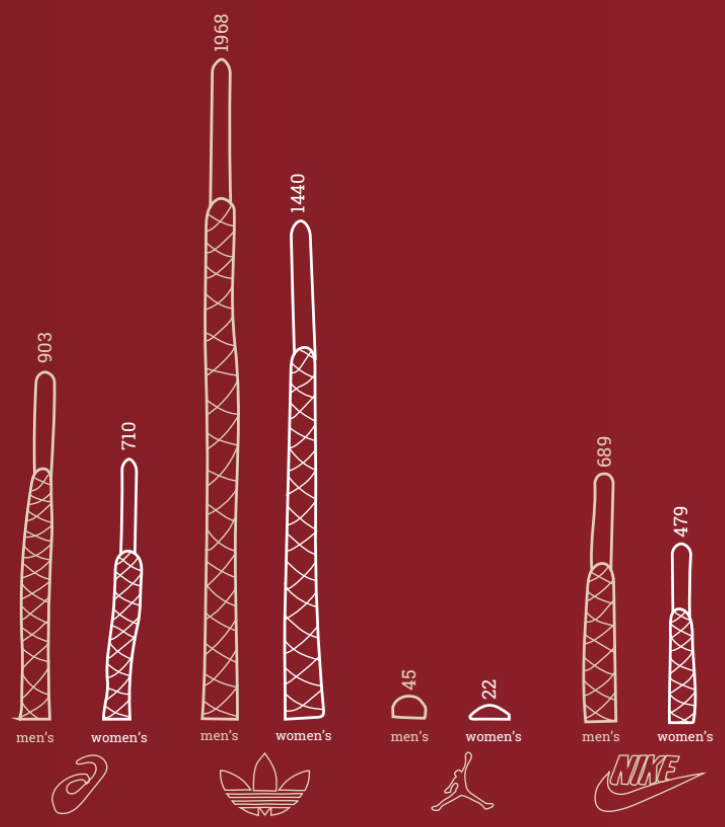
this quote successfully summarizes the attitude of many male record label heads towards female rappers. other than being extremely toxic and disrespectful, the oversexualization of female rappers by males in charge hinders their success.

WOMEN'S SNEAKERS

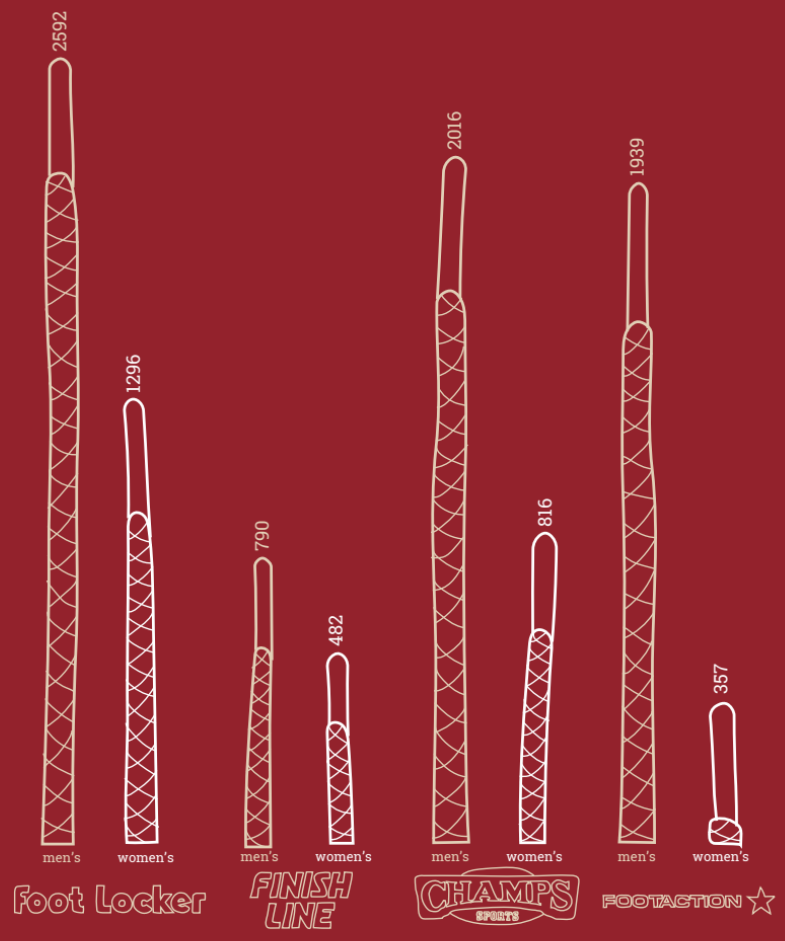
or the lack thereof: men's sneakers significantly outweigh women's

sneaker online availability

sneaker brands



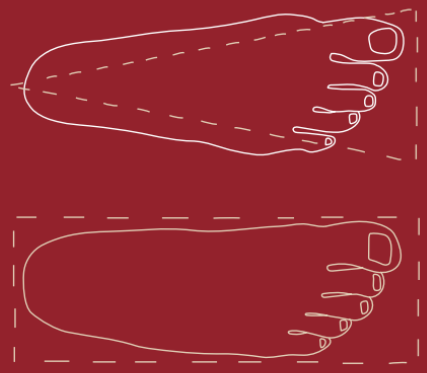
external vendors



the real differences

men's and women's sneakers have very clear distinctions from one another.

the major difference between sneakers for males and females is that a specific size actually has a size and a half difference. for example, a men's size 9 would be equal to a women's size 10.5.



anatomically, women's feet are built differently. women have more triangular feet, being more narrow towards the heel, while men's feet are more rectangular. this disproves the claim that women should simply buy men's sneakers that fit them.

past designs

historically, sneaker brands haven't put much thought into women's sneaker designs.

shrink it

&

not as much female focus

sneaker brands tend to neglect the woman consumer in more ways than one.

2/10

of the most exclusive sneakers that launched in 2019 were available to women

1/2

on average, there is one pair of women's sneakers for every two pairs of men's

pink it

there is a noticeable trend when it comes to the design of men's vs women's sneakers. sneaker brands will often simply "shrink it and pink it", meaning they make a men's sneaker smaller and make it pink, rather than putting effort into designing sneakers for women.

> "...when it comes to more exclusive drops, it seems as if the female audience is often excluded... Of course, the release is meant to be exclusive, but does that mean that so many women need to be excluded? Point is, we don't need more shoes that are pink, glittery and labeled as "women's exclusive" – we really just want what the dudes are getting."
>
> -Tora Northman, Hypebae article "How Come Brands Still Aren't Making Sneakers in Women's Sizes?"

14% of all available women's sneakers from the most popular brands are pink, on average

3% of all available men's sneakers from the most popular brands are pink, on average

25%

of footwear and apparel are for women

5x

the growth rate of the women's sneaker industry compared to men's in 2017

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

the clear imbalance between men and women seen in the sneaker industry

the faces of signature sneaker lines

47

NBA players in history have had their own signature sneaker(s)

7

WNBA players in history have had their own signature sneaker(s)

17

current NBA players have their own signature sneaker(s)

0

current WNBA players have their own signature sneaker(s)

32

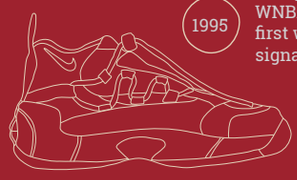
rappers in history have had their own signature sneaker(s)

2

female rappers in history have had their own signature sneaker(s)

historical reference

the best example of the lack of female sneaker line representatives is the extreme disproportion between men's and women's professional basketball players with signature sneaker lines. below is a brief history of WNBA players that have defied the odds.



1995

Sheryl Swoopes, legendary WNBA player, becomes the first woman to have a Nike signature shoe

1998

Nike teamed up with WNBA star Lisa Leslie to create the Air Total 9's

1999

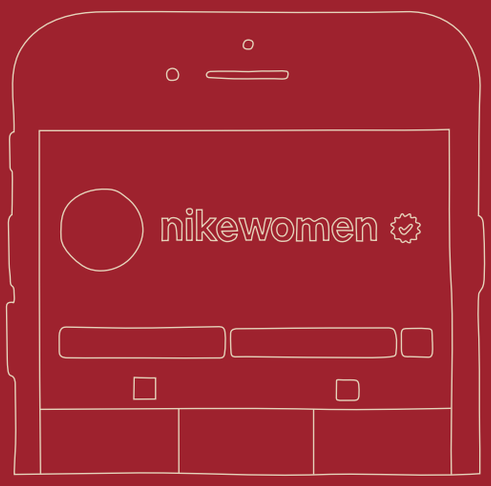
WNBA player Dawn Staley collaborated with Nike to launch the Air Zoom S5, her own signature shoe

> "I just saw Sheryl Swoopes and Cynthia Cooper and Tina Thompson winning W.N.B.A. championships and playing amazing basketball, and I just wanted the shoe. Those things matter, especially when you're young. There's value there. Her work and talent were being rewarded. The investment was worthwhile because it inspired the next generation of women's basketball players."
>
> -Mandy Moore, three-time W.N.B.A. champion with the Minnesota Lynx

a female basketball player has not had their own sneaker in over two decades. as seen in previous infographics, specifically significance of sports, sneaker lines have the potential to provide athletes with immense amounts of revenue. women having far less sneaker lines than men adds to the wage gap, in addition to neglecting to give women the spotlight.

marketing & revenue

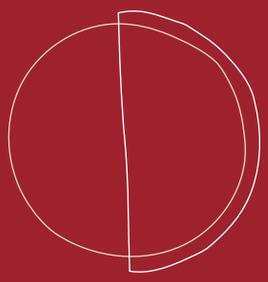
social media exclusion



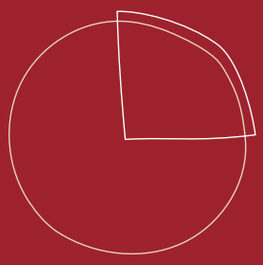
the majority of both sneaker distribution brands, for example Foot Locker, and sneaker brands, for example Nike, have designated "women's" social media pages. in theory, this sounds like a positive, however, this is often the marketing department's subtle way of segregating gendered content and pushing the women's social posts to a profile with far less followers.

distribution of profits

many argue that WNBA players don't make as much money as NBA players because they don't bring in enough revenue. however they are still underpaid:

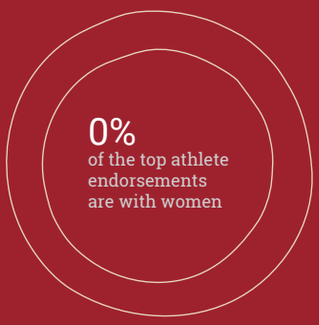


the NBA gives their players 50% of the league's profits



the WNBA gives their players 25% of the league's profits

sponsorships



3/25

of Jordan's signed sponsored basketball players are female

THE GENDER PAY GAP

the clear disproportionate payment between men and women on many levels

broad view

on average in 2019, American women earned

79 cents for every 1 dollar earned by men.

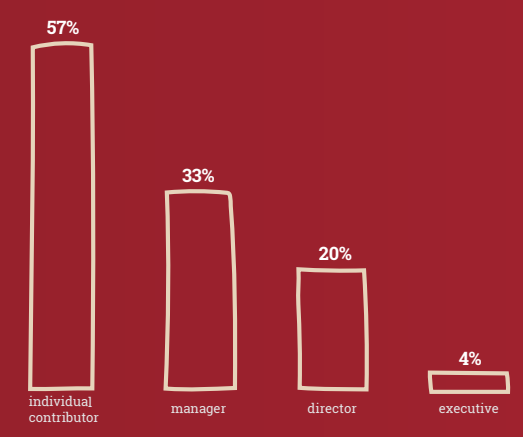
some women earn even less based on their race:

black	**$0.74**
american indian	**$0.74**
hispanic	**$0.74**
pacific islander	**$0.79**
white	**$0.80**
asian	**$0.93**

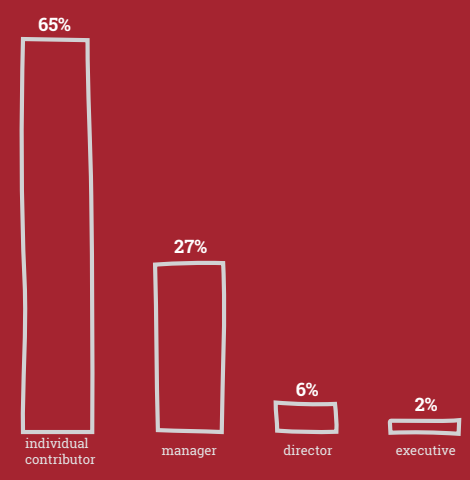
the opportunity gap

women in America also have a clear disadvantage in securing positions and excelling in their careers.

men's career progression:

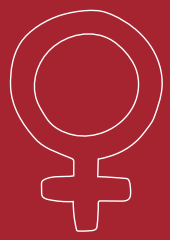


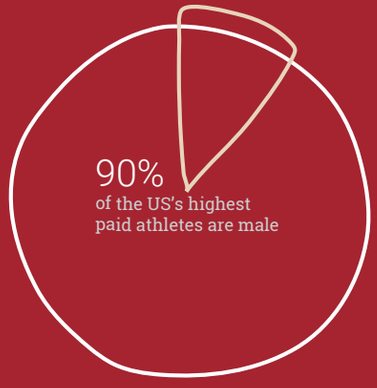
women's career progression:



professional sports

Average salaries for players on men's and women's teams within the NBA vs WNBA, MNT vs WNT, and NHL vs WNHL.





ROLE MODEL IMPORTANCE

the psychological need to have role models that look like you

scientifically proven

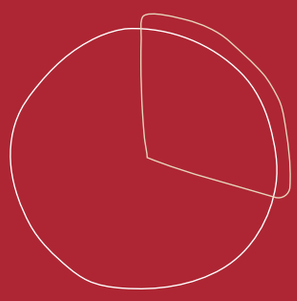
"i could do that"

by nature, it is difficult to quantify the psychology behind the benefits from having people to look up to that look like you; this type of positive impact has different affects on different people. however, it has been proven that people often don't attempt something if they think they will fail. people are much more likely to try things that have already been achieved by someone who looks like them. one person breaking the glass ceiling makes it relatively easier on the rest of that specific demographic.

> "For me, seeing that woman cross the stage with her baby told me something that had never occurred to me before. It told me a woman like me could get a doctorate and still have a family... Those things may be hard to document. But they're important."
>
> -Nancy Darling Ph. D, Psychology Today Article: "I Could Do That: Why Role Models Matter"

63% of women, on average, choose female role models

76% of men, on average, choose male role models



27% of women in a study explicitly stated that it was important for them to have a role model who had overturned gender stereotypes or achieved success in a traditionally male-dominated field

why you should empower women

1 to simply do the right thing: gender equality is a moral imperative

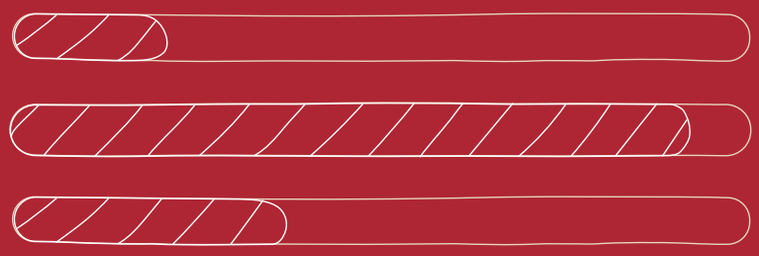
2 to fight gender discrimination and to allow women to play a part in society

3 to utilize women as managers of natural resources and powerful agents of change

4 to reduce the rate of domestic violence and the exploitation of sex

5 to grant women economic independence

6 to facilitate the national development of society

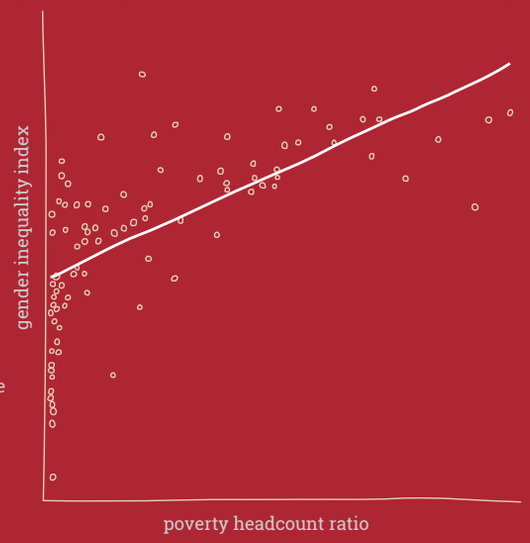


15% gdp lost due to gender gaps in the economy

90% women's average investment in their children

35% men's average investment in their children

poverty and gender inequality



As pop culture trends shift over the years, core social issues remain constant, as seen in my research. By utilizing the iconic symbol of the sneaker, I approached the timeless issue of gender inequality from a different perspective. In today's media, one can find an abundance of information about the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women, so much so that this topic often becomes white noise. Sneaker culture is a movement that has been gaining traction for decades, providing the opportunity to capture viewer's attention and to direct it to something important that they might have otherwise ignored. The more educated the general public becomes on the issue of gender inequality the closer our society comes to equality and understanding.

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sneaker market basics

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