

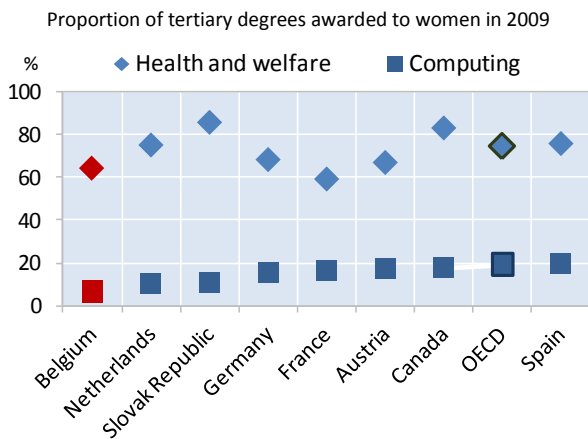


Greater educational equality has not translated into equality in the labour market.

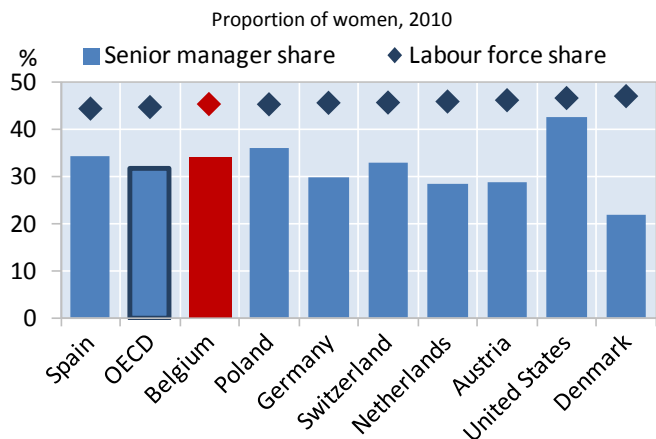
Belgian women are now better educated than their male counterparts: 49% of women aged 25 to 34 have a [tertiary degree](#) compared to 36% of men of the same age. The education advantage of young women is a strong improvement from the older cohorts: 21% and 26% of 55-64 year-old women and men have a tertiary degree respectively. Yet Belgium has one of the largest gender differences in mathematics performance between boys and girls (as measured by the PISA assessment among 15-years-old). The advantage of boys is further translated into the subject choice in post-secondary education: only 7% of tertiary qualifications in computer science are awarded to women (3% lower than 10 years ago), the lowest share among OECD countries.

The female labour force participation rate has increased significantly over the past two decades (from 46% in 1990 to 62% in 2010), but remains below the OECD average (65%) and the male participation rate in Belgium (73%). Closing the gender gap in labour force participation would translate in an increase in the GDP per capita annual growth rate of 0.6 percentage points. At the same time, the “glass ceiling” which prevents women from progressing in their careers to top-level salaries seems to be less prevalent in Belgium than in other OECD countries: the [gender wage gap](#) (8.9%) is about half the size of the gap in the average OECD country (15.8%) and is roughly the same among top earners. Nevertheless, women remain under-represented in senior management functions (34%, while they represent 45% of the labour force) and in the boardroom (barely 10% of the boards of listed companies are women, despite the legal obligation to have one third of each gender in management boards). The impressive increase in parliamentary seats occupied by women, from 12% in 1995 to 39% in 2011, could be an important way of pushing ahead with gender equality in the labour market.

Very few Belgian women opt for computer science in tertiary education



Women are underrepresented in senior management functions



Female business owners in Belgium have one of the highest levels of educational attainment in the OECD, also considerably higher than their male counterparts: 52% of self-employed women have completed tertiary education compared to 33% on average in the OECD and 40% of Belgian self-employed men. Yet, they [earn significantly less](#) than male entrepreneurs and the gender gap in earnings is higher than for wage employment. A major factor in the earnings gap between male and female entrepreneurs is that women devote less time to their businesses than men. Nevertheless, Belgian self-employed women work the hardest in the OECD, with a median of 45 hours per week, compared to the OECD average of 39 hours.