



Gender gaps in education and employment in the United States are small on average. More family-friendly workplace benefits and flexible working arrangements would help mothers work more. Giving low-income families better access to affordable childcare would help reduce poverty.

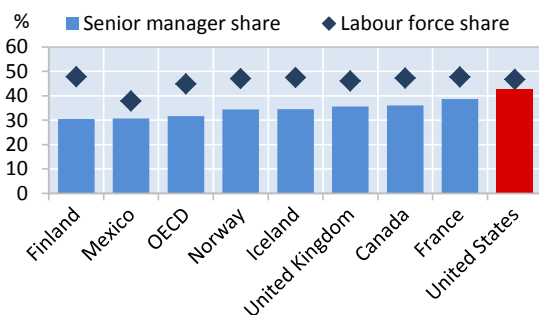
Young women in the US generally outperform young men in education. At age 15, boys score better in math on average, but girls have a much bigger advantage in reading literacy. Young women are more likely than young men to have a university degree: 46% of women vs. 36% of men aged 25 to 34. However, young women shy away from pursuing much sought-after scientific degrees: for example, in 2009 only 21% of [tertiary degrees in computing were obtained by women](#). To get more girls to study these subjects, it would help to raise awareness of the consequences of educational choices on career and earnings prospects.

In the US, 62% of women are employed, 6 percentage points above the OECD average. In 2010, women in employment accounted for 43% of managers in the US (vs. 32% in the OECD) but with a 19% [gender pay gap](#), the US remains above the OECD average of 16%. The gender pay gap is even wider at the top of the pay scale (23%): the “glass ceiling” seems still hard to break through in the US. Legislation like the recently introduced Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act may help to reduce the pay gap further.

Female employment is key to reducing family poverty: in 2009, 62% of American couple families with children had two parents working full-time (40% across the OECD). Still, 7% of dual-earner couples are poor, as are one-third of single-earner couples, and 90% of jobless households with children. Middle and upper income dual-earner families with young children are more likely to have access to domestic services (including nannies) and high-quality childcare centers. But many low-income families cannot afford to do the same. Public policy could do more to help low-income families access quality and affordable childcare. Support may vary across individual states, but in the US public investment in childcare (children 0-5) in 2009 was around 0.4% of GDP compared with 0.7% across the OECD on average.

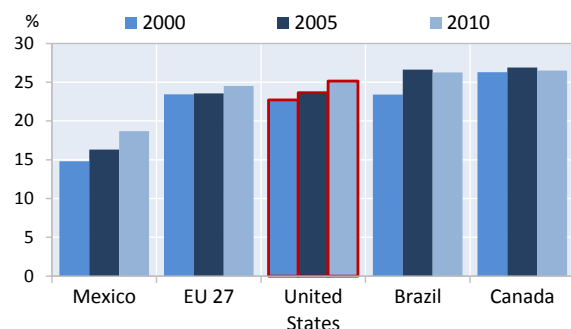
US women have achieved strong representation in senior management

Women as percentage of professionals and senior managers and women as a percentage of the labour force



The proportion of female entrepreneurs has increased but remains low

Share of self-employed with employees who are women, 2000-2010



The US is the only OECD country without a national paid maternity or paternity leave policy. Available leave is short (12 weeks) and leave payments are offered only by some states. Leave payments are offered by some employers as part of their employee benefit packages, but this is usually limited to high-paying jobs. Encouraging firms to offer more family-friendly workplace benefits and flexible working arrangements would help parents, most frequently mothers, to work and therefore boost economic growth.

Women-owned enterprises have been growing faster in numbers than those owned by men, but in 2011 women still accounted for only 25% of [business-owners with employees](#). Lower capitalization, choice of sector, lack of managerial experience and a lower number of hours that they can devote to their businesses mean that self-employed women own smaller businesses and earn on average 35% less than men. Policies for female entrepreneurship should not only target small enterprises, but also provide instruments to stimulate growth of medium-sized and large businesses.