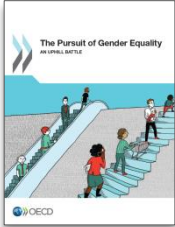


How does the UNITED STATES compare?



The 2017 OECD report *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle* explores how gender inequalities persist in social and economic life around the world. Young women in OECD countries have more years of schooling than young men, on average, but women are still less likely to engage in paid work. Gaps widen with age, as motherhood typically has negative effects on women's pay and career advancement. Women are also less likely to be entrepreneurs, and are under-represented in private and public leadership. In the face of these challenges, this report assesses whether (and how) countries are closing gender gaps in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and public life. The report presents a range of statistics on gender gaps, reviews public policies targeting gender inequality, and offers key policy recommendations.

Women's progress has stalled in the United States

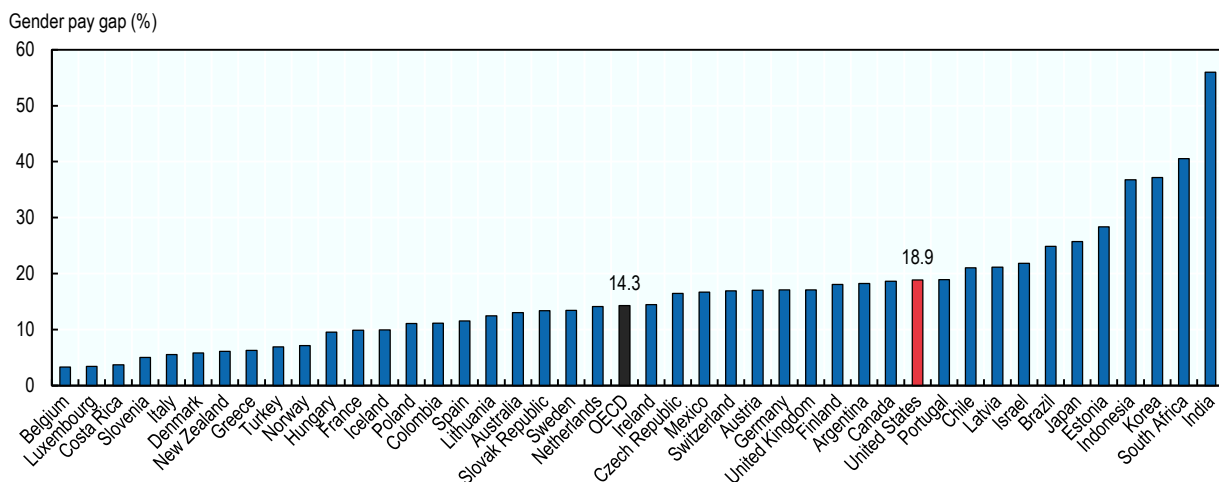
The United States has long been a leader in the OECD in terms of women's labor force participation, with a historically high share of women in the workforce and an above-average share of women in full-time work. Yet these gains have stagnated in recent years. Progress in American women's employment rate has stalled and is now slightly below the OECD average (Chapter 11), even though young American women are about eight percentage points more likely than men to complete tertiary (college) education (Chapter 6).

The United States' gender wage gap for full-time workers is higher than the OECD average, with the median full-time working American woman making only 81 cents to the median man's dollar (Chapter 12). The annual gender

wage gap is even larger when including part-time workers, the majority of which are women.

Gender inequalities in the United States require a comprehensive policy response. One of the biggest barriers to gender equality, in the United States and worldwide, is the unequal distribution of unpaid caregiving at home. Gender gaps in employment widen with parenthood (Chapter 11). American women are much less likely to work when they have young children, in part because the United States lacks the well-developed work-life balance supports that are common in most OECD countries. The lack of paid parental leave and inadequate access to good-quality, affordable childcare means that many American women cannot fully participate in the economy and in society. The stakes are high, and policy action is urgently needed.

Gender pay gap, 2015 or latest available year



Notes: Gender gap in median earnings for full-time employees. The gender gap is defined as the difference between male and female median monthly earnings divided by male median monthly earnings for full-time employees. Data for the United States are based on weekly earnings. See [Figure 1.3](#)

Summary indicators of gender equality

	Female share (%) of bachelor's graduates	Female share (%) of graduates in science, maths and computing	Gender gap (p.p.) in the labour force participation rate	Female share (%) of managers	Gender pay gap (median earnings, full-time employees, %)	Gender gap (p.p.) in the share of workers who are employers	Female share (%) of seats in parliament
United States	57.3	40.3	11.5	43.4	18.9	2.1	19.2
OECD average	58.2	39.2	12.2	31.2	14.3	3.3	28.7
Top performer	69.1 (SWE)	56.9 (PRT)	3.0 (FIN)	44.3 (LVA)	3.3 (BEL)	1.7 (NOR)	47.6 (ISL)
Bottom performer	45.4 (JPN)	21.3 (CHL)	42.0 (TUR)	10.5 (KOR)	37.2 (KOR)	4.6 (ISR)	9.5 (JPN)

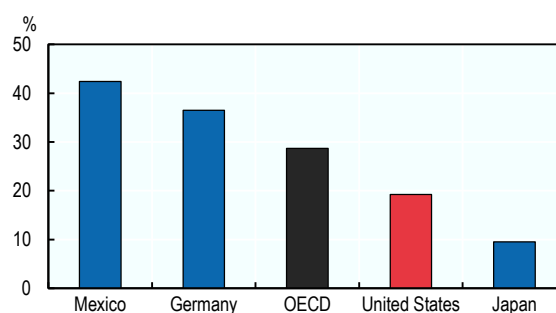
Notes: BEL = Belgium, CHL = Chile, FIN = Finland, ISL = Iceland, ISR = Israel, JPN = Japan, KOR = Korea, LVA = Latvia, NOR = Norway, PRT = Portugal, SWE = Sweden, TUR = Turkey

In a survey carried out for *The Pursuit of Gender Equality*, governments identified the three most important gender inequality issues in their country as violence against women, the gender wage gap, and the unequal sharing of unpaid work. Many OECD countries are now prioritizing these issues in policy, and many are also pushing to get more women into public and private sector leadership.

Women are underrepresented in Congress

The United States ranks low in the OECD for the number of women in Congress (Chapter 14). Fewer than one in five U.S. Congresspersons in the House of Representatives is a woman, compared to women holding 28.7% of seats in lower houses of national legislatures, on average, across the OECD. The majority of OECD countries have addressed this inequality by implementing some form of affirmative action for women in political leadership. This has contributed to a much higher representation of women in countries like Mexico, where over 40% of seats in the lower house of Congress are held by women. Women's representation in leadership has important implications for public policy design.

Women in Congress, 2016

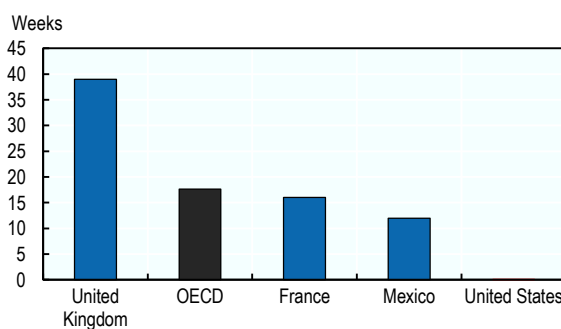


Notes: Data refer to the situation on 01/12/2016. Lower house or single chamber only. See [Figure 1.8](#)

Still no paid leave for new parents at the national level

Paid leave for new mothers and fathers helps to protect the health of mothers and newborns, encourages new mothers to stay in the workforce, and helps families balance work and family. The United States is the only country in the OECD that does not offer paid maternity leave at the national level, and is in the minority of OECD countries that do not provide fathers with an entitlement to paid paternity leave (Chapter 16). This is a major impediment to gender equality, as many mothers are forced to leave work after having a child and consequently become the main unpaid caregiver in the household.

Weeks of paid maternity leave, 2016

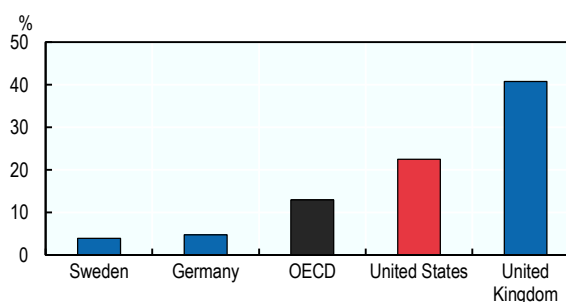


Notes: See [Figure 16.1](#)

The cost of childcare remains high

High childcare costs are a significant drain on family budgets and act as a barrier to paid work for many second earners and single parents. In the United States, childcare costs claim roughly 22% of the disposable family income of a two-child, full-time, dual-earner couple with moderate earnings (Chapter 17). For a moderate-earning single parent, the bill reaches nearly 50% of disposable income. The high cost of childcare in the United States has depressed female labor force participation, as women – who on average earn less than men – tend to be the ones to drop out of paid work when childcare costs outweigh wages.

Childcare costs as % of net family income, 2015



Notes: Net cost of childcare for a two-child dual-earner family, with the first earner on 100% of average earnings, and the second on 67%. See [Figure 17.4](#).