**Englisch LK REB Gender 29th November 2024**

**How has the role of women changed over the last 50 years?**

Women's representation in Congress and participation in the workforce has grown, but disparities still exist at home and elsewhere.

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How has the role of women changed over the last 50 years?

Societal structures change from generation to generation, leading to changes in the roles women play in politics and the workforce, and childrearing. But how has women's participation in different sectors of American society changed over the last 50 years?

**Are more women serving in Congress?**

In the past four decades, [women’s representation in Congress](https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R43244" \t "_blank) has increased substantially. Women now make up a quarter of members of Congress, which is more than double the number who served in the 106th Congress of 1999 to 2001.

Women held 150 seats in the 117th Congress, which spanned January 3, 2021, to January 3, 2023, making up about 25% of Congress. Even though women’s participation in Congress is up 56% from a decade prior, to reach representation proportional with the population, that number would need to double.

**Has women’s participation in the workforce increased?**

Women’s [labor force participation rate](https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2002/05/art2full.pdf" \t "_blank) grew from 34% in 1950 to 60% in 2000, and is expected to 0.7% per year through 2050. This figure, however, varies among different demographic groups.

Despite Congress passing the Equal Pay Act in 1963, a wage gap remains. In 2020, women earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by men, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm). Even with educational advancements and entry into higher-paying fields, women tend to be more represented in lower-paying sectors.

For instance, 77% of public [elementary and secondary school teachers](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr" \t "_blank) were women in the 2020–2021 school year.

Even though 95% of elementary, middle and high school teachers have a bachelor’s degree or higher, their [pay was lower](https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/07/teachers-among-most-educated-yet-pay-lags.html" \t "_blank) than that of their similarly educated peers. Average earnings were $53,800 for elementary and middle school teachers, and $57,840 for high school teachers. To compare, biological scientists earn $69,880, urban and regional planners earn $79,790, and statisticians earn $96,320.

**How do women balance work and childcare?**

Data indicates that mothers are four times more likely than fathers to [miss work due to childcare](https://usafacts.org/data-projects/childcare-work-absences), a trend that has continued even as women’s increasing participation in the workforce. Issues such as paid parental leave complicate this picture. Although the Family and Medical Leave Act mandates a 12-week parental leave for many employees, it does not require that this leave be paid. Recent data shows that 89% of workers had access only to [unpaid family and medical leave](https://usafacts.org/articles/who-has-access-to-paid-sick-and-medical-leave/).

Women’s roles in the United States— in political arenas, the workforce, and at home—have experienced significant shifts over the decades. As women’s representation in Congress has grown, so has their participation in the labor force. But, while some disparities shrink, others persist. Understanding the data behind these trends can add context to gender roles and inform debate and policy on future equity initiatives.

525 words

Source: <https://usafacts.org/articles/how-has-the-role-of-women-changed-over-the-last-50-years/>

**Gender inequality in the United States - statistics & facts**

Gender inequalities exist around the world, including in the United States. Although women make up [over half](https://www.statista.com/statistics/737923/us-population-by-gender/" \t "_blank) of the U.S. population, they remain minorities within the most elite sectors of society; as of 2023, women constituted [less than 30 percent](https://www.statista.com/statistics/691216/share-of-women-in-top-positions-in-united-states/" \t "_blank) of the House of Representatives, the Senate, Fortune 500 CEOs, and governors nationwide. Yet, any female presence in such positions of power demonstrates progress towards the advancement of women’s rights compared to a century ago. Traditionally, American women were excluded from paid work and politics, their capabilities believed to be limited to childcare and housekeeping, while men were seen as the ideal workers without such distractions. Despite subsequent expansion of [women’s economic empowerment](https://www.statista.com/statistics/192396/employment-rate-of-women-in-the-us-since-1990/" \t "_blank) and the rise of dual earner households in the U.S., [outdated stereotypes](https://www.statista.com/chart/8403/many-still-think-of-women-as-less-capable/" \t "_blank) surrounding gender roles still devalue women’s work to this day. In comparison to men, women in the U.S. [earn less](https://www.statista.com/statistics/203459/female-to-male-earnings-ratio-of-workers-in-the-us/" \t "_blank) , even when doing the [same job](https://www.statista.com/statistics/244096/us-gender-wage-gap-for-the-20-most-common-occupations-for-women/), and they [feel pressured](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1418332/pressures-faced-by-working-mothers-and-fathers-us/" \t "_blank) to take on more responsibilities at home, even when working [full-time](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1421916/average-time-spent-on-work-care-and-leisure-by-husbands-and-wives-us/" \t "_blank). Simultaneously, even though women surpass men on [educational attainment](https://www.statista.com/statistics/184272/educational-attainment-of-college-diploma-or-higher-by-gender/" \t "_blank) in the U.S., they continue to be underrepresented in the [highest-paying careers](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1421903/share-of-women-working-in-the-highest-paying-occupations-us/" \t "_blank), and even if a woman has a higher degree than a man, it is still likely that the man will [earn more on average](https://www.statista.com/statistics/185332/median-weekly-earnings-of-full-time-wage-and-salary-workers-by-educational-attainment/).

**Is the future of politics female?**

According to the 2023 Global Gender Gap report, the United States ranked [only 43rd out of 146 countries](https://www.statista.com/statistics/244387/the-global-gender-gap-index/" \t "_blank) examined for gender equality by the World Economic Forum, trailing behind neighboring countries Canada and Mexico, who came in 30th and 33rd respectively. The report outlined how the U.S. lost points due to declines in women’s [life expectancy](https://www.statista.com/statistics/263736/life-expectancy-of-women-in-the-united-states/" \t "_blank) and in the amount of women in senior and ministerial positions, although the share of parliamentary positions held by women has increased overall. While high political offices remain dominated by men, more women can now be found in [Congress](https://www.statista.com/statistics/952906/us-congress-share-women-congress/" \t "_blank), the [House of Representatives](https://www.statista.com/statistics/691100/share-of-women-in-us-house/) and the [Senate](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1358335/women-senators-party-us/) than ever before. Moreover, despite still lacking a female head of state, [Kamala Harris](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1172346/share-us-adults-favorable-opinion-kamala-harris/) was appointed as the first female Vice President in 2021, suggesting positive trends for female representation in leadership positions in the future.  
  
However, a 2023 study found [over half of Americans](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1427084/us-beliefs-on-why-there-are-fewer-women-than-men-in-high-political-offices/" \t "_blank) to believe that a major reason behind why there are fewer women than men in high political offices is that women have to do more to prove themselves while a further 44 percent cited that family responsibilities make it harder for women to run for office, demonstrating how lingering assumptions on female capabilities may hinder future advancement of women in American politics. In addition, the study revealed how [50 percent of Americans](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1378035/public-opinion-reasons-gender-pay-gap-us/) said that a major reason that women earn less, on average, than men, is that women are treated differently by employers and 42 percent agreed that it was because women tend to make different choices between balancing work and family, further supporting the theory that gender equality in the U.S. remains restricted by outdated [gender stereotypes and expectations](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1219071/stereotypes-about-women-among-the-g7-countries/" \t "_blank).

**A dual burden for mothers**

Despite having the highest GDP in the world, the United States remains the only OECD country to not offer any form of national paid leave. Even more concerningly, the United States is the only country apart from Papua New Guinea to not offer new mothers some sort of [paid maternity leave](https://www.statista.com/chart/8359/the-us-is-still-light-years-behind-in-maternity-leave/" \t "_blank), instead providing eligible employees with a modest 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for family or medical reasons. However, as women are more likely to [work part-time](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1378067/number-employed-workers-gender-work-status-us/" \t "_blank) than men, they are therefore less likely to meet eligibility requirements for unpaid leave. Additionally, research has revealed that management and professional occupations provide the most [access to paid family leave](https://www.statista.com/statistics/323706/percentage-of-us-civilian-workers-with-access-to-paid-family-leave/" \t "_blank) for their employees, occupations which tend to be dominated by men. As a result, women may struggle to remain in the workforce if they choose to start a family, particularly as studies have shown that outsourcing childcare in the United States is generally considered [unaffordable](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1428393/us-parents-childcare-challenges/" \t "_blank) for most families. The [high costs of childcare](https://www.statista.com/statistics/253938/full-time-care-cost-for-an-infant-in-a-child-care-center-in-the-us-by-state/) and lack of paid leave mean that many working women in the U.S. must balance work and family responsibilities without assistance, a dual burden which is especially exacerbated for low-income families and single mothers.  
  
According to the literature, mothers in the U.S. are often forced to work in low-wage occupations with certain incentives, such as flexible hours, part-time work, and supplied childcare, all of which are rare among higher wage careers. Consequently, single mothers, lacking dual income, tend to be at greater risk of experiencing poverty; comparison of the overall [U.S. poverty rate](https://www.statista.com/statistics/200463/us-poverty-rate-since-1990/) with that of the poverty rate for families who only have a [female head of household](https://www.statista.com/statistics/204747/poverty-rate-for-families-with-female-householder-in-the-us/" \t "_blank) reveals that poverty is much more prevalent in the latter. As children in the United States are significantly more likely to live with a [single mother than a single father](https://www.statista.com/statistics/252847/number-of-children-living-with-a-single-mother-or-single-father/" \t "_blank), further attention should be given to ensuring that women in such situations can provide for their families and so that mothers nationwide can participate wholly in society, regardless of their assigned gender.

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