



Women in America: Employment

Women in America provides a statistical portrait showing how women's lives are changing in five critical areas: people, families and income, education, employment, health, and crime and violence. By bringing together data from across the Federal government, the report is one of the most comprehensive sources for information on women's lives today and greatly enhances our understanding both of how far American women have come and of the areas where there is still work to be done.

Women's lives have changed substantially in recent decades. As the report indicates in regards to employment:

- The participation of women in the workforce rose dramatically through the mid-1990s, but has been relatively constant since then.
- Workforce participation among men has declined, but women are still less likely to work in the paid labor force than are men. When women do work, they are much more likely than men to work part-time.
- Women continue to spend more of their time in household activities or caring for other family members; they also do more unpaid volunteer work than men.
- Despite their gains in labor market experience and in education, women still earn less than men.
- In part, this is because women and men work in different occupations, with women still concentrated in lower-paying and traditionally female occupations.
- Because women earn less and because two-earner households have higher earnings, families headed by women have far less income than do married-couple families.

The additional data referenced in the online compendium of Federal government data relating to women, accessible at <http://wh.gov/data-on-women>, further indicates:

- Women were a lower percentage of scientists and engineers who also served in a management capacity than they were of all scientists and engineers employed in business and industry in 2006.
- The average hours per day women spend in leisure and sports activities is less than the hours spent by men.
- Women in technical and professional services have the highest median weekly earnings of full time wage and salary workers, but women's earnings as a percentage of men is highest for those employed in the agriculture industry.

Supporting Women and their Families

The Obama Administration is moving forward on several fronts to improve employment opportunities for women and their families.

Fighting for Jobs and Economic Security for America's Families

The Obama Administration has invested in small businesses through tax cuts and zero taxes on capital gains for investments, has supported the clean energy jobs of the future by encouraging companies to build the windmills, solar panels and electric car batteries that will power our economy here in America, and has begun to rebuild America's roads, railways and runways so America's businesses can compete throughout the country and the world. We've expanded the availability of SBA loans to small businesses, which are three to five times more likely to go to women and minority-owned businesses than conventional bank loans. We've supported jobs for teachers, and invested in child care and Head Start programs to help support working parents. Now, instead of losing jobs, the economy is steadily creating new private sector jobs each month.

Having emerged from the worst recession in generations, the President has put forward a plan in his 2012 Budget to rebuild our economy and win the future by out-innovating, out-educating, and out-building our global competitors and creating the jobs and industries of tomorrow. The President's 2012 Budget offers a responsible approach that puts the nation on a path to live within our means so we can invest in our future – by cutting wasteful spending and making tough choices on some things we cannot afford, while keeping the investments we need to grow the economy and create jobs. It targets scarce federal resources to the areas critical to winning the future: education, innovation, clean energy, and infrastructure. And it proposes to reform how Washington does business, putting more federal funding up for competition, cutting waste, and reorganizing government so that it better serves the American people.

Standing Up for Equal Pay for Equal Work

In America today, women make up nearly half of the workforce, yet women make only about 77 cents for every dollar that men earn. The gap is even more significant for working women of color, and it affects women across all education levels. This is not just a question of fairness for hard-working women. Paycheck discrimination hurts families who lose out on badly needed

income. That's why the President created the National Equal Pay Enforcement Task Force and increased resources for the agencies enforcing existing equal pay laws.

But our existing laws are not enough. Upon taking office, the first bill President Obama signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act preventing employers from using the statute of limitations to block wage discrimination claims by workers who learn that they are victims of discrimination years after the discrimination begins. The President has also called on Congress to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, which will stop retaliation against employees who share or seek wage information and close a loophole that some employers use to avoid paying women equal wages.

Winning the Future Through Education and Worker Training

In just ten years' time, America went from being number one in college graduation rates among young adults to number nine in the world. Our graduation rates fell, and the cost of college exploded. President Obama believes that nations that out-educate us today will out-compete us tomorrow, and that a good education is critical to ensuring everyone gets their piece of the American Dream. That's why the President has made a commitment to raise the graduation rate by 2020 to put America back on top. He has launched a *Race to the Top* for America's schools with strong new reforms that demand excellence and the finest teachers in our classrooms, and he has removed the barriers that keep young people from affording a college education, including tripling the investment in college tax credits for middle class families through the American Opportunity Tax Credit created in the Recovery Act.

In March 2010, President Obama also signed the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act, which represents the largest investment in higher education since the G.I. Bill. This legislation expands college opportunity for all Americans by:

- Ending \$60 billion in wasteful subsidies to big banks and rolling it back into financial aid for college students;
- Strengthening the Pell Grant program to ensure that all eligible students receive an award—providing funding to an additional 820,000 students as a result.
- Providing an historic investment in community colleges—\$2 billion over four years—to expand education opportunity and career training programs and prepare more students for the jobs of tomorrow.
- Investing in Historically Black Colleges and other Minority Serving Institutions,
- Helping student borrowers manage their student loan debt by capping repayments at 10% of their discretionary income.

To improve job training opportunities, the President's Budget provides funding for a competitive Workforce Innovation Fund that will allow States and localities to create and test new ideas and strategies for delivering better results. The Budget also provides nearly \$10 billion to fund Workforce Investment Act programs to match unemployed workers with jobs and give people with skill gaps the training they need to secure employment. The Administration will also work with Congress to reform the Workforce Investment Act to better meet the needs of employers and regional economies.

Promoting Workplace Flexibility and Work-Family Balance

For the majority of American families, it is no longer the case that one parent is the breadwinner while the other is the caregiver. Women now make up nearly half of all workers on U.S. payrolls, and two-thirds of children in America are being raised with a single parent or in a home where both parents work. The economic stability of American families depends in part on policies that help them balance work and care-giving obligations. These policies include workplace flexibility; affordable, quality child care and elder care; supporting family caregivers; and enforcing equal pay laws. That's why the President's Budget proposes:

- Expanding the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit so that nearly all eligible families making under \$103,000 per year would get a larger credit;
- Building on historic increases in Head Start and child care provided in the Recovery Act;
- Investing \$96 million in the Caregiver Initiative, an effort to expand help to families and seniors so that caregivers can better manage their multiple responsibilities and seniors can live in the community for as long as possible.; and
- Helping states provide paid family leave to workers.

In addition, the President, Vice President, First Lady and cabinet officials have held forums to promote workplace flexibility, and to encourage employers and workers in the public and private sectors to explore and implement best practices that help families and employers alike.