

Committee: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Eliminating the glass ceiling effect

Student Officer: Emmeleia Kokolaki, Filippou Dounis

Position: Co-chair, Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Emmeleia Kokolaki and I am a senior at Pierce – The American College of Greece. It is my honor to be serving as the Deputy President of the Economic and Social Council for the 3rd time. The 4th ACGMUN will be my last conference and, by extension, my last chance to show my love and passion for MUN, which I hope will be transmitted to you throughout the conference. Writing on behalf of my Co-Chairs, we would appreciate seeing your interest, debate skills, and good preparation. However, should you need any further explanation or clarification regarding this specific topic as well as the Study Guide, please feel free to contact me via my personal email at any time: E.Kokolaki@acg.edu

Thank you for choosing the Economic and Social Council and I am already looking forward to cooperating with you all.

Best regards,

Emmeleia Kokolaki

Dear Delegates,

My name is Filippos Dounis, I am an IB1 student at Geitonas School and it is my honor to serve as the President of the Economic and Social Council in the 4th American College of Greece Model United Nations. I would like to welcome you all to this distinguished United Nations body and hope to witness two days of productive and fruitful debate where all parties will be involved in the debating process.

This study guide aims to provide you with a basic understanding of the topic. Most aspects of the issue will be carefully analyzed aiming to assist you in grasping the current situation and be able to think critically and evaluate the role of gender in today's workplace. Although informative, the study guide should not serve as your sole studying resource. The topic in question is a multidimensional one and requires individual research in order to draft such a resolution where efficient and feasible solutions will be proposed. Furthermore, it is crucial to conduct individual research in order to understand your country's policy in detail. Our goal is to analyze and evaluate to what extent does gender influence one's success in today's society and whether the same opportunities are provided to the two genders. It is crucial to comprehend the severity of the topic in question, as it is one that affects all member states. Your goal is to provide such frameworks, that could effectively combat the glass ceiling effect and provide all people with the same opportunities despite their gender.

If you have any inquiries do not hesitate to reach me at filippedounis@protonmail.com

Yours Sincerely,

Filippos Dounis

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The term “glass ceiling” became popular during the 1980s. This is mostly due to two pieces of writing, presenting the place of women within corporate environments: the 1984 book “The Working Woman Report” and the 1986 Wall Street Journal article “Barriers to Women in High Corporate Positions”. Despite the many preceding uses of the term, its first reported use was in Adweek: "Women have reached a certain point — I call it the glass ceiling. They're in the top of middle management and they're stopping and getting stuck."

Dictionary definition aside, one can describe the glass ceiling effect as the barrier that stops women from rising from low-middle managerial positions to top executive roles in a corporation.

One may be led to believe that such issues have been long combatted and they remain a mere memory of an older time. By analyzing different graphs concerning the glass ceiling effect, one might even be persuaded by the said statement. For instance, the graph below portrays a seemingly huge increase of women CEOs since the 90s. However, the rise which is portrayed as exponential in the graph actually portrays a tiny 4% increase. The scale of the Y-axis has been set in such a way where this tiny increase appears as an unprecedented spike in the number of woman CEOs.

The glass ceiling persists

General Motors named Mary Barra as its next CEO, replacing Dan Akerson. Here's a look at how women are faring in their advancement to the top of Fortune 500 companies and the durable goods sector.

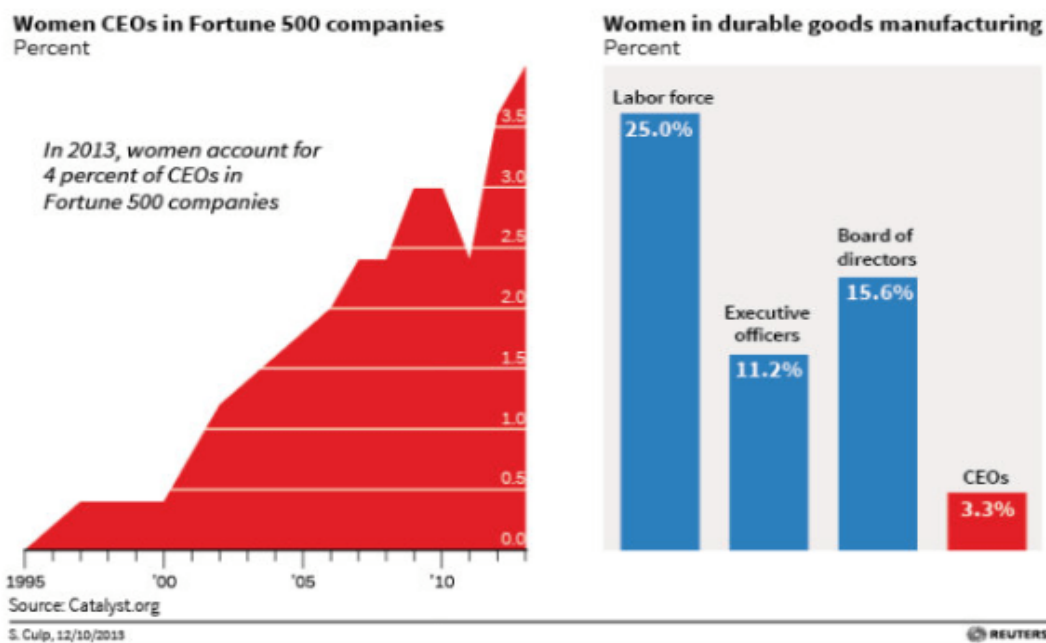


Figure 1 Women CEOs in Fortune 500 companies and durable goods sectors (2013)

A more accurate visualization of the statistics would be the one below, where the scale of the Y-axis has been set to more appropriate values. Reality is that we are still a long way from reaching equal representation for both genders in corporate settings. The only way we can actually reach a solution is by examining the issue and evaluating what are the factors that have been contributing to the survival of the glass ceiling effect, as well as what can be done to provide feasible and effective solutions to this timeless issue.

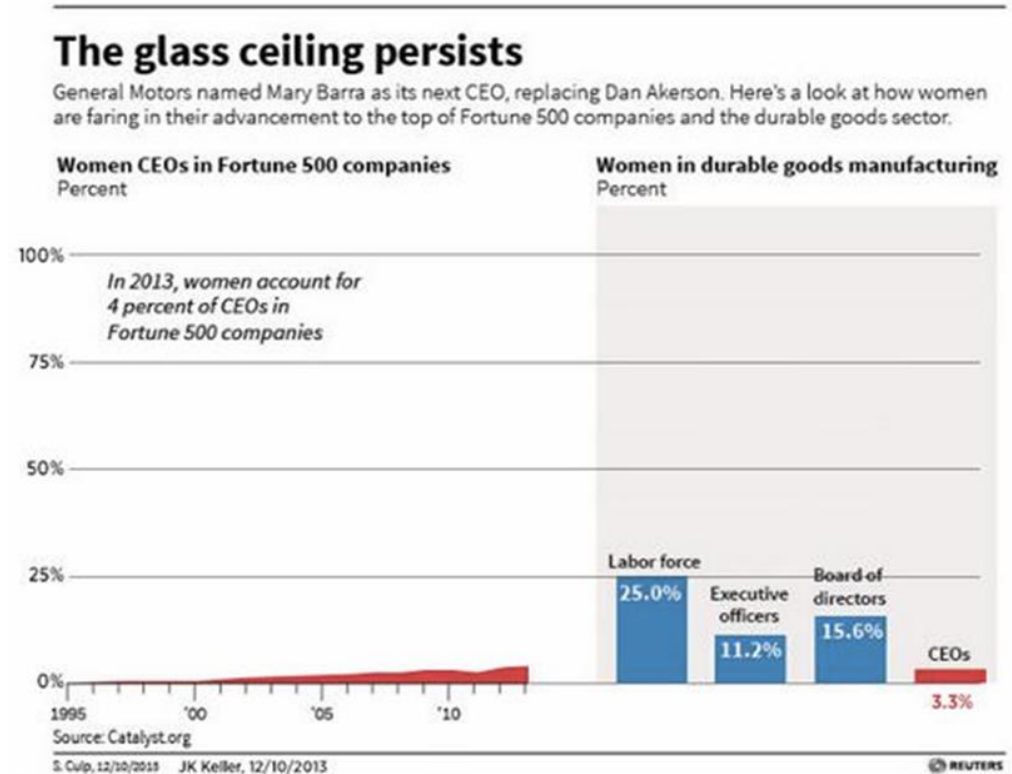


Figure 2 The graphs presented in Figure 1 in more appropriate scales, depicting the rise of females in CEO positions more objectively

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Glass ceiling

The term refers to “the unseen, yet unreachable barrier that restrains women (and minorities) from rising to the upper step of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or attainments”.¹

Glass escalator

The term “glass escalator” or “glass elevator” refers to the precipitous promotion and upward advancement of men over women into management positions

¹ Gupta, Sakshi. Glass Ceiling in 21st Century: Women in Management . July 2018, researchersworld.com/ijms/vol5/issue3_5/Paper_13.pdf.

especially in female-dominated fields such as nursing, education, social work, and even ballet.

Sticky floor

“A metaphor sometimes used to convey the difficulties that disadvantaged groups experience in moving from the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. Whereas the glass ceiling evokes the idea of a barrier preventing access to management grades, the sticky floor focuses attention on the first stage of progression where discrimination can be experienced”.²

The frozen middle

“The frozen middle is the most conservative layer in the organization. It is the most resistant to new ways of doing business, and to innovative ideas and perspectives. "Middle-status conformity effect" leads individuals to choose the safety of the tried-and-true over inventiveness and ingenuity”.³

Glass ceiling index

In 2017, the “Economist” updated their glass-ceiling index. It combines data on higher education, labor-force participation, pay, child-care costs, maternity and paternity rights, business-school applications and representation in senior jobs. The countries where inequality was the lowest were, in order of most equality, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Poland.⁴

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is the difference in average gross hourly earnings between women and men, often doing the same job. It is based on salaries paid directly to employees before income tax and social security contributions are deducted.⁵

Discrimination against women

Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has

² “Sticky Floor - Oxford Reference.” Sticky Floor - Oxford Reference, 3 Nov. 2019, www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100532868

³ Reynolds, Jennifer. “What Is the Frozen Middle, and Why Should It Keep Leaders up at Night?” The Globe and Mail, Google, 2 May 2017, www.google.gr/amp/s/www.theglobeandmail.com/amp/report-on-business/careers/leadership-lab/what-is-the-frozen-middle-and-why-should-it-keep-leaders-up-at-night/article34862887/.

⁴ “Glass Ceiling.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 4 Jan. 2020, en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glass_ceiling.

⁵ “Understanding the Gender Pay Gap: Definition and Causes: News: European Parliament.” Understanding the Gender Pay Gap: Definition and Causes | News | European Parliament, 13 Jan. 2020, www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20200109STO69925/understanding-the-gender-pay-gap-definition-and-causes.

the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.⁶

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

History of the term “glass ceiling”

Although it is widely known that the expression “glass ceiling” first appeared in 1986 in the Wall Street Journal’s article’s title: "The Glass Ceiling: Why Women Can't Seem to Break The Invisible Barrier That Blocks Them From the Top Jobs", Marilyn Loden, an American writer, is said to be the first person who used the term in one of her speeches in 1978. Since then, thousands of articles have been written about it because it is one of the most crucial problems our world faces today.

The “glass ceiling effect” refers to the persistent failure of women to climb to the upper steps of the corporate ladder, irrespective of their qualifications, abilities and achievements. Invisible from the bottom, when women started their careers, a transparent barrier was steely strong in stopping them from attaining equality with men later on. This explains the fact that in large businesses both in Europe and North America women rarely came to account for more than 10% of senior executives and 4% of CEOs.

As the expression got more issued within society, the public responded with differing opinions. In particular, some even argued that the glass ceiling is only a myth, since it is preferable for women to show dedication to household chores rather than putting effort to obtain upper-level positions. However, as proved by a research project called “The Glass Ceiling Initiative” the phenomenon is rather a reality. As a result, in 1991, as a part of Title II of the Civil Right Act of 1991, Congress created the Glass Ceiling Commission, a 21 member Presidential Commission, which was created to study the "barriers to the advancement of minorities and women within corporate hierarchies, to issue a report on its findings and to make recommendations on ways to dismantle the glass ceiling."⁷ The commission conducted extended research including, surveys, public hearings and interviews, and released their findings and recommendations on how to improve the workplace not only by increasing diversity but also by reducing discrimination in the corporation through policy, in a report in 1995.

⁶ “Discrimination against women” <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

⁷ “Glass Ceiling.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 27 Jan. 2020, en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glass_ceiling.

To conclude, as the years go by, the number of women CEOs from the Fortune Lists has been increasing from 2012–2014. However, women's labor force participation rate decreased ironically from 52.4% to 49.6% between 1995 and 2015 globally.

Glass ceiling and glass escalator

Over the past few years there have been described two theories, which attempt to explain the differences in treatment between men, women and minorities. The first one is the “glass ceiling”, according to which there is a limit to the advancement of women and minorities both in the labor market and in the workplace. According to BBC, a recent survey of the world’s tech powerhouse asked women to reveal their workplace woes and the results were indeed shocking for the 21st century. In particular, 60% had faced unwanted sexual advances, whereas 65% were left out from a variety of social events. This shows that women are not just hitting a glass ceiling, but they might also be climbing a “broken ladder”. It is worth mentioning that gender discrimination is not born of the belief that women are less capable than men, but that they are specialized in other fields. The stereotype that women are by nature compassionate, communicative and thus more appropriate to carry out jobs of service, is undoubtedly related to the professions that are female dominated.

On the other hand, the “glass escalator” theory asserts that even in female-dominated professions, men are promoted with greater ease. The moment women struggle against the fated “glass ceiling”, their male peers face an ironic position of riding the “glass escalator”. This means that not only do they occupy quicker job opportunities but also, they reach the top ranks of management in major corporations easier than women. However, since the glass ceiling is so widely known, the glass escalator is often not discussed, but we should not forget that it is a topic worthy of attention, especially when discussing the glass ceiling.

A more controversial approach

The glass ceiling effect is undeniably a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in society. It is a product of centuries of gender discrimination and stereotypes that have led to the unfair distribution of power among the two genders in both corporate and government level. However, many choose to believe that women share a responsibility for the existence of the said effect in modern times. Supporters of the aforementioned notion contribute this effect to four main reasons which include the supposed lack of negotiation power and will of women; self-undervaluation of women, fewer work hours, and risk aversity among women.

Lack of negotiation power and will of women

According to Katie Shonk, a research associate for Harvard Law School, women tend to not be the best negotiators. In fact, it appears that this observation tends to be true for women who are negotiating about themselves (e.g. promotion)⁸. On the other hand, it seems like women are better in negotiating on behalf of other people. Researches point at a lack of self-worth consciousness as the main perpetrator. Better compensation packages are often not pursued, and most women do not actively aspire to climb the corporate ladder, as they suffice to their basic salary in combination with that of their husbands. It has also been observed that women tend not to persist in negotiating about extra perks, such as relocation expenses; housing and/or transportation allowances, up-front severance package agreement, larger operating budget and/or more staff, a more significant position title, more vacation time.

Self-under-valuation of women

It has been observed that some women tend to ignore the impact their contribution could have by obtaining leadership positions within their work environment. They are unable to connect the said contributions with the well-being and benefit of the company. They believe that they have nothing to contribute by doing so and it is better to let the men lead. A certain percentage of women even believe that members of the same gender are not fit to be leaders. On the contrary, they believe that men tend to be more inspirational within the context of corporal leadership and are more capable to move a company further. The main reason for which this appears to be believed by many, is women's lack of interest concerning metrics and money. Statistically, more women choose different educational and professional paths rather than strategy, finance, budget allocation, performance metrics, and data analytics, failing this way to convert such knowledge into actionable intelligence that can help the corporation progress.^{9 10}

Fewer work hours

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, men work around 14 hours

⁸<https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/business-negotiations/women-and-negotiation-narrowing-the-gender-gap/>

⁹ "Only about 13% of academic economists in permanent posts are women"
<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-41571333>

¹⁰ "Why are there so many few women economists?"
<https://review.chicagobooth.edu/economics/2019/article/why-are-there-so-few-women-economists>

more per month than women¹¹. Special accommodations, fewer working hours and more payed-leave are also commonly granted to women. Evidently, this becomes an issue for employers whose primary objective is maximizing profit and efficiency. Due to their role as mothers, women also tend to be less likely to work over-hours and accept working until late. Contrary to corporations, their primary aim lies in providing for their children and being next to them in times of need which is often deemed necessary due to the lack of an effective child care system offered by the state or even the lack of such a service at all.

Risk aversity among women

Women have been reported to be less risk-averse, portraying a greater fear of failure. Although this may present little to no issues for a desk employee, things change when one moves higher in the hierarchy. Decision-making and proper responses are vital for any executive. The premise mentioned above can be examined in more detail in a paper published by Homaira Kabir in *Forbe's Management Science* sub-section¹². According to the writer, an experiment was conducted during SAT exams. Both the female and male subjects that undertook the exams had prepared the same materials. Female subjects skipped more than twice the number of questions male students did. Once they were told that they would not be marked for wrong answers, female students completed all of the questions. It was thus asserted by the results of the experiment that the female test-takers tended to demonstrate a greater fear of failure compared to the male ones. Supporters of the idea that women share some responsibility of the existence of the glass ceiling effect claim that the risk aversity of females may stop them from seizing possible opportunities. Hence, the notion that risk aversion is generally a female quality creates an environment within which women are less likely to be allowed to rise.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

France

Although France stands firmly against the gender gap, it appears that it has failed to resolve the situation. According to a *Financial Times* article,¹³ more than 100

¹¹ <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/atus.pdf>

¹² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2018/06/14/why-some-women-fear-taking-risks-and-what-were-not-doing-about-it/#1294be6f67da>

¹³ <https://www.ft.com/content/8b6a7440-4110-11e9-9bee-efab61506f44>

of the biggest French corporations have failed and keep failing to meet the targets set for equality between the two genders. French officials believe that although the transition is going to require time, it will eventually turn out fruitful. The glass ceiling effect in France can be easily proven by observing the man-woman ratio in managerial positions. Reportedly, women account for 42.3 percent of executives and senior managers in the public sector and 41.2 percent of firms' business administration, when they account for more than 54 percent of teaching and scientific professionals.¹⁴

Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland

Nordic countries currently claim to be the most gender-equal societies in the world. This is mostly due to welfare policies, benefit systems that minimize economic incentives for full-time work, and monopolies and/or cartels in female-dominated sectors. Although the wage gap of the said countries is the lowest in the world, it seems like the glass ceiling effect continues to be prevalent among Nordic societies. Despite the equal wages of men - women, the number of men in managerial roles seems to outnumber that of women greatly.

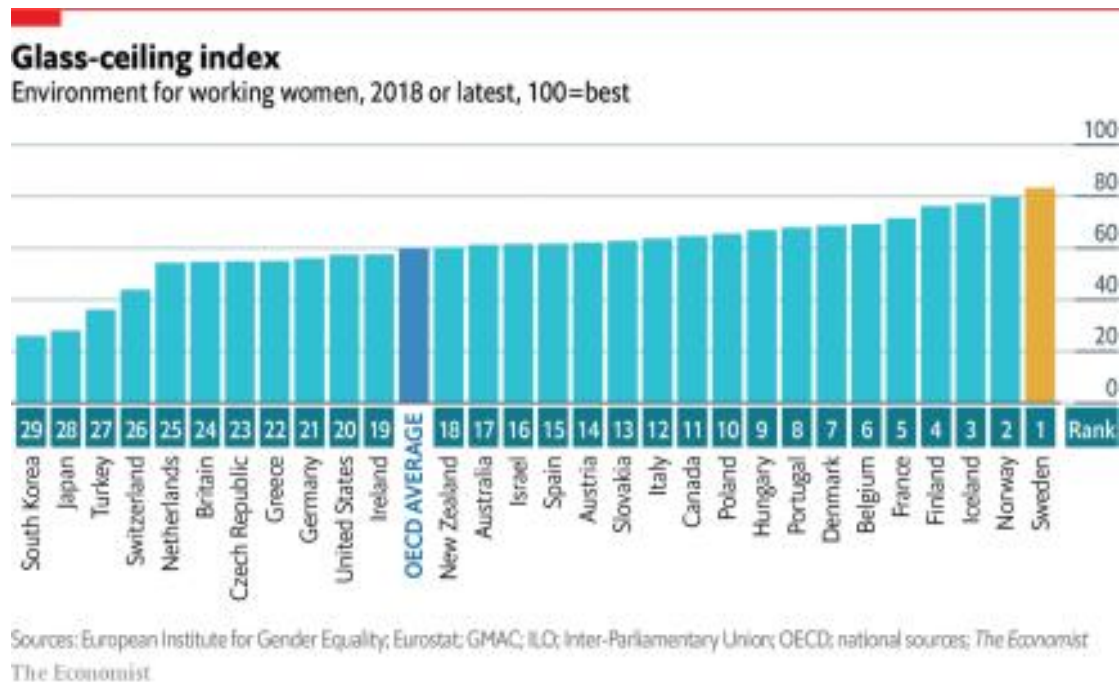


Figure 3 Global comparative glass ceiling index

Japan

Despite being one of the most developed countries of Eastern Asia, Japan is facing a “gender crisis”. It has been reported that Japan currently holds the position

¹⁴ Laufer J. (2009) Women in Management and the Glass Ceiling: The French Situation. In: Mousli B., Roustang-Stoller EA. (eds) Women, Feminism, and Femininity in the 21st Century: American and French Perspectives. Palgrave Macmillan, New York

of the country with the highest gender inequalities in the proportion of managerial positions among the countries that consist the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD).

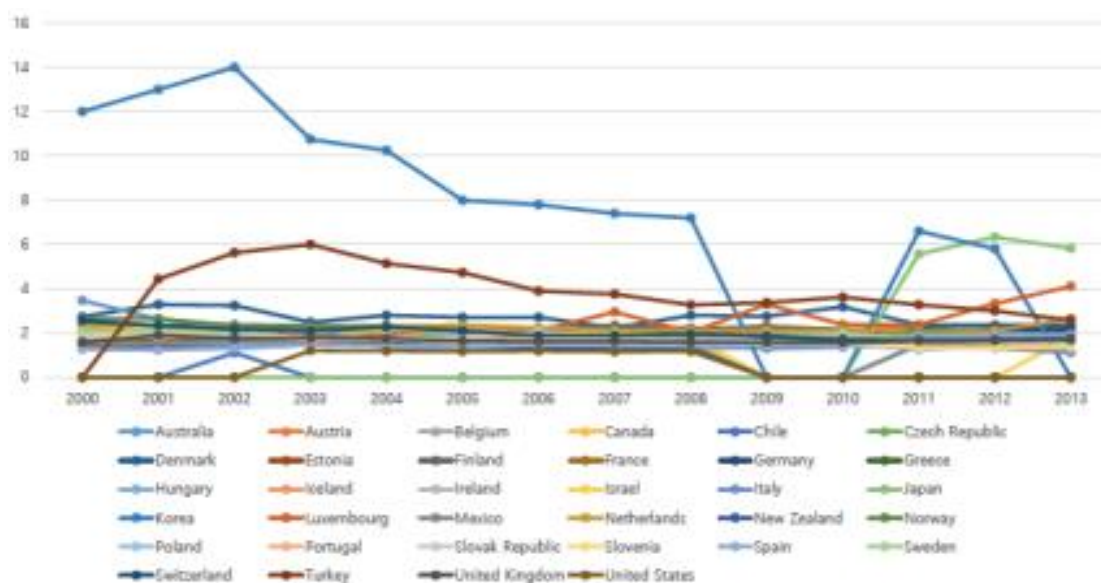


Figure 4 Graph comparing the inequalities in the proportion of managerial positions among the countries that consist the OECD

Turkey

Contrary to the direction of the UN, Turkey does not seem eager to issue reforms to change the current situation in the country. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute women make up for 30% of Turkey’s workforce. The percentage of women in managerial positions is also extremely low with only 12.2% of executives being women according to the International Labor Office. It is also worth mentioning that Turkey is ranked 45th out of the 48 countries that make up the “ILO research for the percentage of women in high-level positions.”

United States of America (USA)

In the United States women:

Earn more than 57 percent of undergraduate degrees and 59 percent of all master’s degrees.¹⁵

Earn 48.5 percent of all law degrees and 47.5 percent of all medical degrees.¹⁶

¹⁵ National Center for Education Statistics, “Table 318.30. Bachelor’s, master’s, and doctor’s degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by sex of student and discipline: 2015-16,”

¹⁶ National Center for Education Statistics, “Table 324.50. Degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected professional fields, by sex of student, control of institution, and field of study: Selected years, 1985-86 through 2015-16,”

Earn 38 percent of Master of Business Administration and other generalist degrees and 49 percent of specialized master’s degrees. ¹⁷

Account for 47 percent of the U.S. labor force and 52.5 percent of the college-educated workforce. ¹⁸
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Despite the aforementioned statistics, women in the United States have yet to receive the same representation men seem to have. Women represent only 24% of congress, 28% of seats in state legislatures, 18% of governors, and 23% of mayors.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

UN Women is the product of the merging of different UN bodies concerning women. The organization was established after the adaptation of the resolution 64/289 by the General Assembly. The vision behind the body was according to Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon to “sharpen the focus and impact of the gender equality activities of the entire United Nations system.” The organizations main areas of interest include but are not limited to leadership and political participation of women; economic empowerment; stopping violence against women; peace and security for women across the globe; the SDGs; transmission of sexual diseases; and humanitarian actions globally.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
December 10, 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed.
1975	The 1 st world conference on women took place in Mexico City.
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
1980	The 2 nd world conference on women took place in Copenhagen.
1985	The World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development, and Peace was held in

¹⁷ Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, “2018 Business School Data Guide”

¹⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 25 years and over by educational attainment, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity,”

	Nairobi. (3 rd World Conference on Women)
1995	The 4 th world conference on women took place in Beijing.
July 2nd, 2010	Establishment of UN Women
2015	UN resolution A/70/476/Add.2 was adopted by the General Assembly
January 1st, 2016	The Sustainable Development Goals were introduced

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the 18th of December 1979. Its contents were a product of more than thirty years of work by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. As of now more than 180 states have signed and ratified the treaty.

According to the UN, Member States that accept the Convention are ultimately obliged to follow specific measures aiming to tackle all forms of female discrimination. Some of the most notable aforementioned measures include:

- incorporating the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- establishing tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination;
- ensuring elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.¹⁹

World Conferences on Women

The first World Conference on Women was held in 1975 in Mexico City. Since then three more have taken place whose main goal is empowering women and ensuring equal rights for all.

As previously stated, the first World Conference on Women was held in 1975 at the time of the International Women’s Year. A direct product of the conference was the “Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to

¹⁹ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

Development and Peace”. The resolution which was adopted issued a set of principles concerning the equality of men and women.

The second World Conference on Women was held in Copenhagen in 1980. The conference seemed to be a success and the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” was praised and agreed on being an important milestone in the fight for equality. A consensus was also reached, acknowledging the essential nature of equal access to education, health care, and employment opportunities.

The third World Conference on Women took place in Nairobi in 1985. The conference was crucial as it set for the first time a framework that enabled the measurement of women’s equality. The aforementioned measures include legal measures; equal social participation; equal political participation; and finally, decision making. The conference has also been praised for acknowledging the need for women to participate in all sectors of human activity and not solely on the seemingly predetermined by gender ones.

The fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing in 1995. The initial objective of the conference was to vote for a Declaration which would achieve greater equality for women. The conference turned out in an unexpected manner, as the Holy See disagreed with policies introduced by other UN Member States concerning abortion. The conference sparked much debate and brought issues such as child and infant health; motherhood; sexual diseases; family planning; abortions; reproductive health issues of elder women; and the health of adults to light.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals consist of 17 aims adopted by all United Nations Members in 2015, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Their goal is to provide peace and prosperity for all people and the planet. Although all SDGs are important, the ones most related with the topic on hand are goals five, “Gender Equality” and goal 8, “Decent Work and Economic Growth”. Their goal is to provide a safer world for everyone and ensure the equal representation of both genders in all areas of human activity, ensuring at the same time proper work conditions for everyone.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Tackling the root problems

Despite the progress that took place during the last years, the remaining gender inequality in the work environment is the evidence that men built and continue to build this system. At the same time, females are underrepresented at every level. For instance, gender income inequality, work-family life balance, gender bias and stereotypes are some of the most crucial problems that women face in the labor

market. Regarding the first one, the establishment of income transparency is of utmost importance. In particular, all employees should be allowed to discuss their remunerations, while businesses should issue reports with their statistics about payments. Therefore, salary transparency can help businesses gain the trust of both current and prospective employees and, since they often pay women less without even realizing it, it would significantly improve the matter. Furthermore, concerning work-family balance, there is a need to establish an effective childcare system. For instance, the system should focus on children's health, safety, and happiness, support the early care and education workforce as well as use assessments to support every child's needs across all developmental domains. Moreover, in order to deal with gender bias and stereotypes in the workplace, businesses should explore new methods of recruitment like “blind hiring”, which refers to the removal of all socio-demographic details that might affect decision-making, and, also, promotions based on 360-degree reviews, which include professional feedback about an employee’s performance not only by his subordinates, colleagues, and supervisors, but also by himself in the form of a self-evaluation. Finally, it is true that both meritocracy and equality in the workplace should be enhanced in various ways. Specifically, employees should be judged on the basis of their professional qualifications and achievements regardless of their gender.

State intervention

It is also worth mentioning that businesses should be encouraged to enforce gender quotas in their workforce, in order to ensure that both genders are equally represented. In addition, all corporations should address women's leadership challenges and needed competencies as well ensure females have the experiences and the necessary resources to “climb” the corporate ladder. Last but not least, by extending the right to request flexible working to all employees and by increasing (paid) maternity (e.g. up to 23 weeks) and paternity leave, the chance of pregnancy will probably not serve as an obstacle to their career hunting.

Internal reform of businesses

Courses related to tackling gender bias in the workplace should start in priority from the Human Resource (HR) department of all corporations. The HR teams should recognize the unconscious biases that exist, as well as work on how to fairly evaluate candidates on a predetermined set of criteria. For most workplaces, and before any training, an anonymous survey is a good starting point. Voluntary training programs can follow, and the participants could act as ambassadors, who are naturally influential so that they can pull the more skeptical coworkers to support the diversity.

Raising awareness

Finally, since there is a need to change the culture of today's businesses, continuous awareness programs regarding the glass ceiling effect should be in place running periodically, accompanied with seminars, with the support of various organizations fighting for gender equality and the empowerment of women in all fields, such as UN Women.

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