

2010's Top Ten Facts on Women in the Economy

The Joint Economic Committee releases the top ten facts central to understanding how American women have fared in the economy in 2010, compiled from its December report *Invest in Women, Invest in America: A Comprehensive Review of Women in the U.S. Economy*.

1. **The majority of American women work, and the economy depends on their labor market participation.** Three-quarters (75.2 percent) of women ages 25-54 were in the labor force.¹ Female workers accounted for half (49.7 percent) of total non-farm payroll employees in 2010.²
2. **Women's unemployment is high relative to past economic recoveries, but remains substantially below men's unemployment.** Women's unemployment rate in 2010 averaged 8.6 percent, compared to 10.6 percent for men. The difference between the two unemployment rates is largely due to the gender composition of the industries hit hardest by the Great Recession. Men are more likely than women to be employed in the construction and manufacturing sectors, which saw severe layoffs.³
3. **A substantial gender pay gap persists. In 2010, women who work full-time, year-round earned only 77 cents for every dollar earned by their male peers.** Median annual earnings for a full-time, year-round female worker were \$36,278, compared to \$47,127 for a comparable male worker.⁴ The gender pay gap persisted even amongst highly-skilled professionals. For instance, amongst managers, women earned 83 cents for every dollar earned by men, even after taking into account a wide variety of factors (age, education, experience, presence of children) that might explain the pay discrepancies.⁵
4. **The gender pay gap for older workers is particularly pernicious.** Full-time working women age 50 and older earned about 75 cents for every dollar earned by their male peers. Median weekly earnings for a full-time, year-round female worker age 50 or over were \$713, compared to \$953 for a comparable male worker.⁶
5. **Mothers continue to face a wage penalty.** Even after accounting for differences in work experience, job characteristics, human capital such as education, and other individual attributes, mothers incurred a 7 percent wage penalty per child relative to non-mothers.⁷ This penalty persisted at the highest levels of employment. For instance, mothers who are managers earned 79 cents for every dollar earned by their male manager peers, even after accounting for age, education, and other individual attributes.
6. **Families depend on women's earnings.** One in three families with children (34.2 percent) depended solely on a mother's earnings.⁸ Working wives' incomes comprised over two-thirds (36 percent) of married families' incomes, up from a quarter (26.6 percent) of married families' incomes in 1970.⁹
7. **Most adults in poverty are women.** 57 percent of all non-elderly adults in poverty were women, and 14.6 percent of all non-elderly adult women lived in poverty.¹⁰
8. **Social Security provides a powerful safety net that prevents poverty for millions of older women.** 12 percent of older women (ages 65 and over) lived in poverty. Without Social Security benefits, the share of older women living in poverty would have risen to over 50 percent.¹¹
9. **As of January, the United States will be the only OECD nation with no federal paid parental leave policy.** When the Australian government implements its Paid Parental Leave Scheme on January 1, 2011, the United States will stand alone amongst OECD nations in offering no national system for providing paid parental leave to workers. Indeed, according to the International Labor Organization, the only other nations offering no paid maternity leave are Lesotho, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland.¹²
10. **Women are under-represented in corporate leadership.** While women comprised 46.4 percent of all employees in Fortune 500 companies, they made up just 15.7 percent of board seats, 14.4 percent of executive officers, 7.6 percent of top-earning executive officers, and 2.4 percent of chief executive officers.¹³

¹ Joint Economic Committee Majority Staff calculations using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey. Annual averages are for January 2010 through November 2010, the most recent month for which data is available. "In the labor force" includes both employed and unemployed individuals.

² Joint Economic Committee Majority Staff calculations using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Establishment Survey. Annual averages are for January 2010 through November 2010, the most recent month for which data is available.

³ Joint Economic Committee Majority Staff calculations using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey. Annual averages are for January 2010 through November 2010, the most recent month for which data is available.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Surveys.

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/people/index.html>

⁵ Government Accountability Office. 2010. *Women in Management: Analysis of Female Managers' Representation, Characteristics, and Pay*. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10892r.pdf>

⁶ Joint Economic Committee. December 2010. "Large Gender Pay Gap for Older Workers Threatens Economic Security of Older Women." Citing unpublished data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

http://jec.senate.gov/public/?a=Files.Serve&File_id=052c0f10-0c6b-4578-9dc4-0e14e9abdd7d

⁷ Joint Economic Committee. 2010. *Invest in Women, Invest in America: A Comprehensive Review of Women in the U.S. Economy*.

http://jec.senate.gov/public/?a=Files.Serve&File_id=9118a9ef-0771-4777-9c1f-8232fe70a45c; Government Accountability Office.

2010. *Women in Management: Analysis of Female Managers' Representation, Characteristics, and Pay*.

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10892r.pdf>

⁸ Joint Economic Committee Majority Staff analysis of unpublished Current Population Survey data from

the Bureau of Labor Statistics, originally published in Joint Economic Committee Majority Staff. 2010. "Working Mothers in the Great Recession." http://jec.senate.gov/public/?a=Files.Serve&File_id=c8242af9-a97b-4a97-9a9d-f7f7999911ab

http://jec.senate.gov/public/?a=Files.Serve&File_id=c8242af9-a97b-4a97-9a9d-f7f7999911ab

⁹ Bureau of Labor Statistics. December 2010. *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*. See Table 24. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2010.pdf>

¹⁰ Joint Economic Committee Majority Staff analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and

Economic Surveys. http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032010/pov/new01_100_01.htm

¹¹ Joint Economic Committee. October 2010. "Social Security Provides Economic Security to Women."

http://jec.senate.gov/public//index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=d0036901-2da3-4387-b77f-d33afffe6f7f

¹² International Labor Organization. 1998. "More Than 120 Nations Provide Paid Maternity Leave." http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/press-releases/WCMS_008009/lang--en/index.htm

¹³ Ibid. See also Catalyst, Inc. November 2010. "Women

CEOs of the Fortune 500." <http://www.catalyst.org/publication/322/women-ceos-of-the-fortune-1000>;

Soares, Rachel, et. al. December 2010. "Catalyst 2010 Census: Fortune 500 Women Executive Officers

and Top Earners." [http://www.catalyst.org/publication/459/23/2010-](http://www.catalyst.org/publication/459/23/2010-catalyst-census-fortune-500-women-executive-officers-and-top-earners)

[catalyst-census-fortune-500-women-executive-officers-and-top-earners](http://www.catalyst.org/publication/459/23/2010-catalyst-census-fortune-500-women-executive-officers-and-top-earners);

Soares, Rachel, et. al. December 2010. "Catalyst 2010

Census: Fortune 500 Women Board Directors." [http://www.catalyst.org/publication/460/23/2010-catalyst-census-fortune-500-](http://www.catalyst.org/publication/460/23/2010-catalyst-census-fortune-500-women-board-directors)

[women-board-directors](http://www.catalyst.org/publication/460/23/2010-catalyst-census-fortune-500-women-board-directors)