College-Educated Women Are the Workplace Majority, but Still Don't Get Their Share

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/02/us/american-workers-women-college.html?searchResultPosition=1>

**Women in the U.S. have earned more degrees for decades, but it wasn’t until this year that they edged out college-educated men in the work force. Though they still make a lot less money.**

**By**[**Maya Salam**](https://www.nytimes.com/by/maya-salam)    New York Times July 2, 2019

We’ve reached a tipping point in the United States: For the first time, there are more college-educated women in the work force than college-educated men.

That’s according to a new study from [Pew Research](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/20/u-s-women-near-milestone-in-the-college-educated-labor-force/?utm_source=AdaptiveMailer&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=19-06-20%20women%20in%20labor%20force%20FT&org=982&lvl=100&ite=4253&lea=982361&ctr=0&par=1&trk=&utm_source=AdaptiveMailer&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=19-06-20%20women%20in%20labor%20force%20FT&org=982&lvl=100&ite=4253&lea=982361&ctr=0&par=1&trk=), which analyzed data collected by the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://data.bls.gov/PDQWeb/ln). It found that women 25 and older now make up 50.2 percent of the college-educated work force — up about 11 percent since 2000.

In some ways, the increase is a natural progression.

Women have been earning the [majority of bachelor’s degrees](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_318.10.asp?current=yes), [and more advanced degrees](http://www.aei.org/publication/prediction-no-2017-graduation-speaker-will-mention-this-the-growing-gender-college-degree-gap-favoring-women/), in the United States since the early 1980s, according to the[National Center for Education Statistics](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_310.asp). Of those who earned a bachelor’s degree last year, 57.5 percent were women.

And yet historically, women have been less likely to enter the work force at all after graduation — 36 percent less likely, according to [Bloomberg](https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2018-women-professional-inequality-college/). It wasn’t until this year that they edged out men with similar degrees to become the majority.

While that milestone is significant, women are still [earning far less](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/02/business/equal-pay-day.html?module=inline)money than men. They have been more likely to enter fields with lower income potential like nursing, education and administration. But even those doing the same work as men earn less.

White women must work 16 months to earn what their white male colleagues earned in 12, based on analysis of United States census data. [Women of color must work even longer](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/02/business/equal-pay-day.html?module=inline).

[The 2018 report](https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Women_ES_Web.pdf) “Women Can’t Win,” published by Georgetown University, found that men with bachelor’s degrees make on average $26,000 more per year than women with the same credentials.

Women are also severely underrepresented in certain fields with higher earning potential, namely STEM fields — science, technology, math and engineering — where they account for only about [25 percent of graduates](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/20/world/europe/women-in-stem.html?module=inline) and less than 30 percent of college-educated employees.

According to [a study released last month](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/21/technology/gender-gap-tech-computer-science.html?module=inline), the gender gap in computer science won’t close for 100 years, if current trends continue.

And just because women now make up the majority of the work force, it doesn’t mean they’re running it. In the latest [Fortune 500 list](http://fortune.com/2019/05/16/fortune-500-female-ceos/), published in May, 33 of the highest-grossing companies were led by female C.E.O.s. That’s the most ever, by the way, even though it’s still less than 7 percent of the total.

So what can women who are trying to find a way up in their organization do? Katherine W. Phillips, a professor of organizational management at Columbia University, suggested some solutions this year for The New York Times Magazine’s [Future of Work issue](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/02/21/magazine/women-corporate-america.html?module=inline). One is to find a champion, even if that’s a man.

“You need to get your circle of support around you, and in finding people to support you, sometimes you need to take a risk,” Phillips said. “I guarantee you that in a big workplace, there is a man who can support you. You have to find him. You have to make those connections and build those relationships, as hard as it might be.”