

## Organizations Working To Break the Glass Ceiling

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While progress has been made in breaking the proverbial glass ceiling, it has a long way to go. All around the world, women are underrepresented in many professions and their wages are lower than men's. While women's participation and wages are slowly rising, a considerable gap remains. In the U.S., women earn only 84% of men's wages.<sup>1</sup>

In the legal profession, women have minimally progressed in shattering the glass ceiling. Women's median income is 74% of their male counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Since the year 2000, the increase in female lawyers went from 29.4% to 31.9%; for partnerships from 17.1% to 19.5%; for general counsel at Fortune 500 companies from 15.4% to 18.8%; and for law school deans from 19% to 20.6%.<sup>3</sup> In 2011, women held 27.1% of state and federal judgeships.<sup>4</sup> In 2012, women made up only 15% of equity partners and 26% for non-equity partners in large law firms.<sup>5</sup>

With religious leadership positions, the glass ceiling is even lower. In 2000, Southern Baptists passed a resolution that women could not serve as pastors because Scripture stated it was "limited to men."<sup>6</sup> In 2002, seven Catholic women were excommunicated after being ordained.<sup>7</sup> Muslims also cite Scripture to exclude women and in 2005, a Muslim woman in New York City received death threats after leading a service and delivering a sermon.<sup>8</sup> While Reform and Conservative Jews first allowed a female rabbi in 1972 and 1985, respectively, Orthodox Jews only allow men to serve as rabbis because allowing women would be a "fundamental violation of [timeless] Jewish tradition."<sup>9</sup> Evangelical Protestants claim women are subordinate to men and mention as far back as Adam and Eve as proof.<sup>10</sup> Catholics believe the highest leadership positions are for men only.<sup>11</sup>

However, many are fighting to eradicate discrimination against women. The Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania (WSF) has a mission to "create a region where women and girls have equal access, opportunity, and influence in all aspects of their public and private lives."<sup>12</sup> WSF "promotes social change by addressing fundamental social inequalities and raising the awareness of these inequities to the media, voters, legislators and corporate and non-profit decision-makers."<sup>13</sup> WSF has helped women become elected to the Pennsylvania State House, increased wage equality in Southwest Pennsylvania, heightened protections for victims of domestic violence, banned shackling of women prisoners during child birth, and helped protect affordable housing and healthcare for women. WSF successfully increased women's representation from 25% to over 50% on government boards in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County; increased women's representation on corporate boards from 44 to 100 members; helped to pass a zero tolerance domestic violence prevention policy for all City of Pittsburgh employees; and helped to implement systematic improvements to remedy wage gaps for City of Pittsburgh employees. WSF recently released *Madame Presidentá: Why Not U.S? Vamos Meninas*, a film which documents two women's journeys to explore why other countries have elected female presidents before the U.S.<sup>14</sup>

In 2009, the Pennsylvania Bar Association Commission on Women in the Legal Profession created an *Honor Roll of Legal Organizations Welcoming Women Professionals* to recognize Pennsylvania legal firms and organizations that institute programs to help women lawyers advance their professional careers while maintaining personal lives. The Center for Women's Entrepreneurship at

Chatham University helps women start and grow their businesses and trains them to think and act entrepreneurially.

Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever wrote a book called *Women Don't Ask: The High Cost of Avoiding Negotiation – and Positive Strategies for Change*<sup>15</sup> to encourage women to negotiate their salaries and increase their potential earnings. They note that women who don't negotiate sacrifice over a half a million dollars over their careers. Babcock and Laschever also teach women how to negotiate in their professional careers.

Finally, there are groups like Catalyst<sup>16</sup> and National Women's Business Council<sup>17</sup> working to shatter the glass ceiling. Catalyst works to increase opportunities for women by "creating more inclusive workplaces where employees representing every dimension of diversity can thrive."<sup>18</sup> They work with men, women, and organizations in the U.S., Canada, Europe, India, and Australia to diversify businesses, societies, and life in general.<sup>19</sup> The National Women's Business Council is a federal advisory council that "serves as an independent source of advice and counsel to the President, Congress, and the U.S. Small Business Administration on economic issues of importance to women business owners."<sup>20</sup> It is the only government voice for women business owners and it "provid[es] a platform for change to expand and improve opportunities for women business owners and their enterprises."<sup>21</sup>

These are only a few examples of the many women and organizations working to shatter the glass ceiling. While they have made significant progress, much more needs to be done, as the ceiling is far from broken.

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<sup>1</sup> Lisette M. McCormick, Nicole Henry-Taylor, & Jeanine DeBor, *Is the Glass Ceiling Really Half-Cracked? Barriers Remain for Women in the Profession*, CLE Presentation at Duquesne Law (2013).

<sup>2</sup> *New Millennium, Same Glass Ceiling? The Impact of Law Firm Compensation Systems on Women*, July 2012, <http://www.americanbar.org/women>.

<sup>3</sup> *A Current Glance at Women in the Law*, September 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007, 2006, 2005, 2000, <http://www.americanbar.org/women>.

<sup>4</sup> *A Current Glance at Women in the Law*, September 2012, <http://www.americanbar.org/women>.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Seventh Annual NAWL National Survey on Retention and Promotion of Women in Law Firms*, National Association of Women Lawyers (October 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Catherine A. Brekus, *The Controversy over Women's Religious Leadership in the U.S.*, Phi Kappa Phi Forum (Spring 2014).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> <http://wgfpa.org/who-we-are/>.

<sup>13</sup> <http://wgfpa.org/what-we-do/>.

<sup>14</sup> [www.madamepresidenta.com](http://www.madamepresidenta.com).

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.womendontask.com/>.

<sup>16</sup> <http://catalyst.org/>.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.nwbc.gov/>.

<sup>18</sup> <http://catalyst.org/who-we-are>.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.nwbc.gov/about-the-nwbc>.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*