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# Lifting the Second Glass Ceiling

US market  
overview



By Royal Charter



**In the US, workforce participation by women is relatively high, sitting at 56.8% compared with 67.5% of the male population<sup>1</sup>. The section below explores how women in the US are experiencing the Second Glass Ceiling and looks at which factors are more influential.**

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967<sup>2</sup> is designed to protect certain employees aged 40 and over from discrimination within the workplace in the US. However, with the multiple co-occurring stressors identified by US women as a challenging aspect of midlife, including re-balancing work and personal life, and changing family relationships, demonstrate that age discrimination isn't the main barrier for women remaining in the workplace.

The difficulty can arise for US women seeking to maintain their roles alongside the workplace and a lack of flexibility, accommodation, and policy ensuring them to do so comfortably. The lack of awareness surrounding the multiple challenges women in the US face to stay in the workplace is a key reason why discussion surrounding the SGC is an opportunity for US organizations.



## Key findings

### Work to be done, but a relatively positive picture for US women in the workplace

Over six in ten (62%) US women surveyed are confident their generation will receive the same levels of flexibility and support to stay in the workforce as long as their male colleagues. This is the second highest of the five countries polled and compares with an average of 59% across the five.

Furthermore, US women are relatively unlikely to agree it is uncommon to see women in positions of leadership: 39% agreed with this (the second lowest of the five countries) compared to a global average 42%.

### Role models are considered important

72% of US women believe the presence of more experienced female colleagues would be beneficial to the development of younger women in the workplace, in line with the average of 73% across the five countries polled.

### Women encounter barriers to staying in work

Over a quarter of US women polled (27%) cited caring responsibilities (for parents or children) as a barrier to remaining in the workplace. This figure is close to the average across the five nations surveyed, with only China significantly higher at 41%. Only one in ten women in the US saw no barriers to staying in work. Women in the US are slightly less likely than others to mention health or well-being considerations for menopause as a barrier to continuing work (16% compared to 21% across all countries polled).

### Discomfort discussing menopause, health issues related to menstruation, difficult pregnancies, and miscarriage

More than half (56%) of US women believe it would be difficult to raise these issues, with an employer (close to the five-country average of 58%).

There is a marked difference depending on the gender of the manager with 46% in the US uncomfortable to raise these issues with a male manager (52% across all countries), but only 14% saying they would be uncomfortable talking to a female manager (18% globally).

### Formal policies would help

Consistent with the global picture, 71% of women polled in the US believe it is helpful for organizations to have formal policies to address personal health and wellbeing issues such as menopause, health issues related to menstruation, difficult pregnancies or miscarriage, but only 4% say they are aware of such policies in their organization.

[Read the full Lifting the Second Glass Ceiling report and see the recommendations here](#)

<sup>1</sup> [Gender Statistics](#), The World Bank, accessed June 2023

<sup>2</sup> [Age Discrimination](#), US Department of Labor, accessed June 2023

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