

Women in the Michigan Workforce

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TRISHA SCHLEGEL
Economic Analyst



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Acknowledgments

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This report is an update to the 2024 Women in the Michigan Workforce report, with a continued focus on earnings, parental status, and employment by industries and occupations. In addition, the current report offers information on the Michigan labor force, industry projections, and international comparisons.

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Executive Summary

- Michigan women who work full-time, year-round, earn approximately **79 cents per dollar** that men earn. This disparity is larger when including part-time workers at 71 cents per dollar.
- Median earnings for women who work full-time, year-round increased by **2.8 percent** over the year while comparable earnings for men in Michigan jumped by 5.9 percent.
- Labor force participation for Michigan women has **grown since 1980** while men's participation has declined.
- Women with children under five in the U.S. have a labor force participation rate of **73 percent** compared to 95 percent among male counterparts.
- Four out of every five Michigan workers in **Healthcare and social assistance** are women.
- **Industries dominated by women** are projected to experience employment growth through 2032 in Michigan.
- The U.S. lags other countries in labor force participation among prime-age workers but shows **unique patterns** when considering the presence of children.

Introduction:

Women in the Michigan Workforce Over Time

Women in Michigan have increased their presence in the labor force since 1980. In 1980, the labor force had around four women for every six men. By 2024, this ratio was near five women for every five men. Although it has happened over 44 years, women now represent nearly half of the labor force, approaching their statewide population share of 50.5 percent.

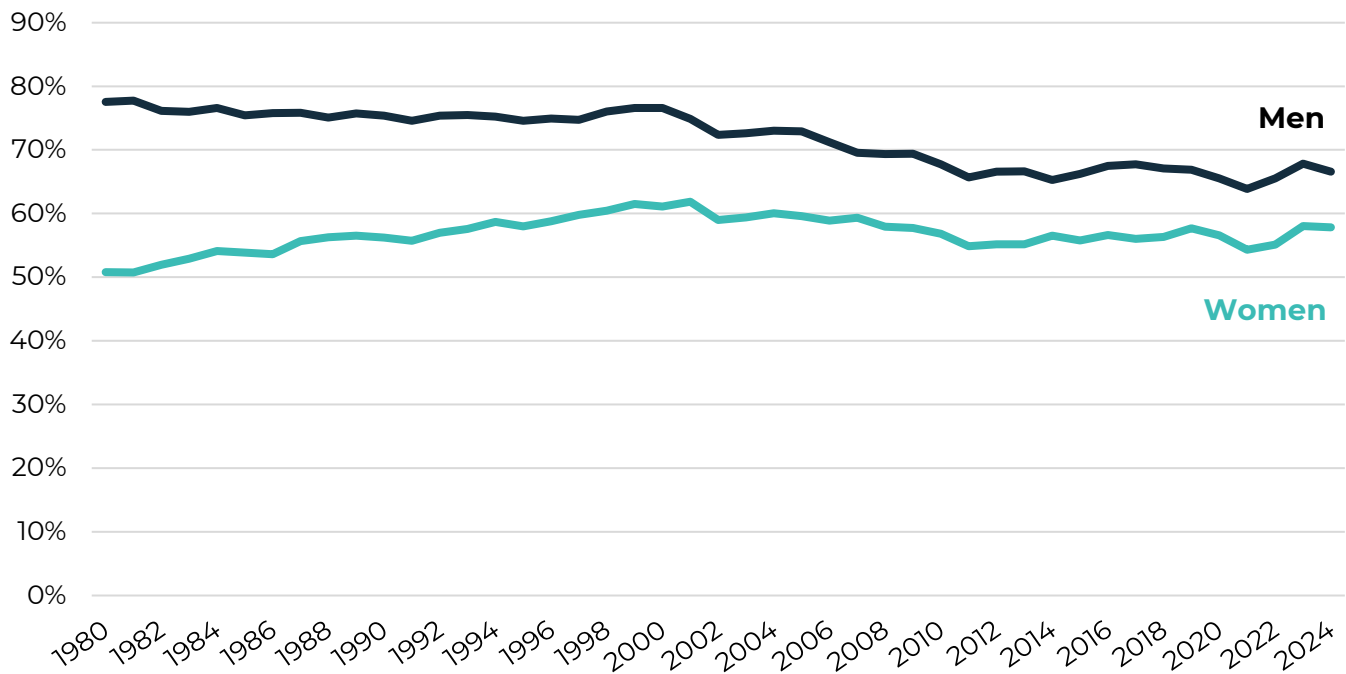
While men make up most of the total labor force in the state, their participation rate has gradually declined while the rate for women has grown. Women's labor force participation increased from just under 51 percent in 1980 to nearly 58 percent in 2024. Comparatively, men in Michigan have experienced a decrease

of 11 percentage points, down to 67 percent participation in 2024. Since 2019, the gap in labor force participation rates between men and women in the state has largely remained below 10 percentage points.

Along with increased prevalence in the Michigan labor force, women's occupational representation has also experienced notable shifts. Between 1980 and 2024, women moved from minority to majority representation in several occupation groups: *Legal; Business operations specialists; and Life, physical, and social science*. At the same time, women's employment shares declined notably in *Sales and related; Food preparation and serving; and*

Over the past 44 years, the gap in labor force participation rates between men and women has gradually decreased.

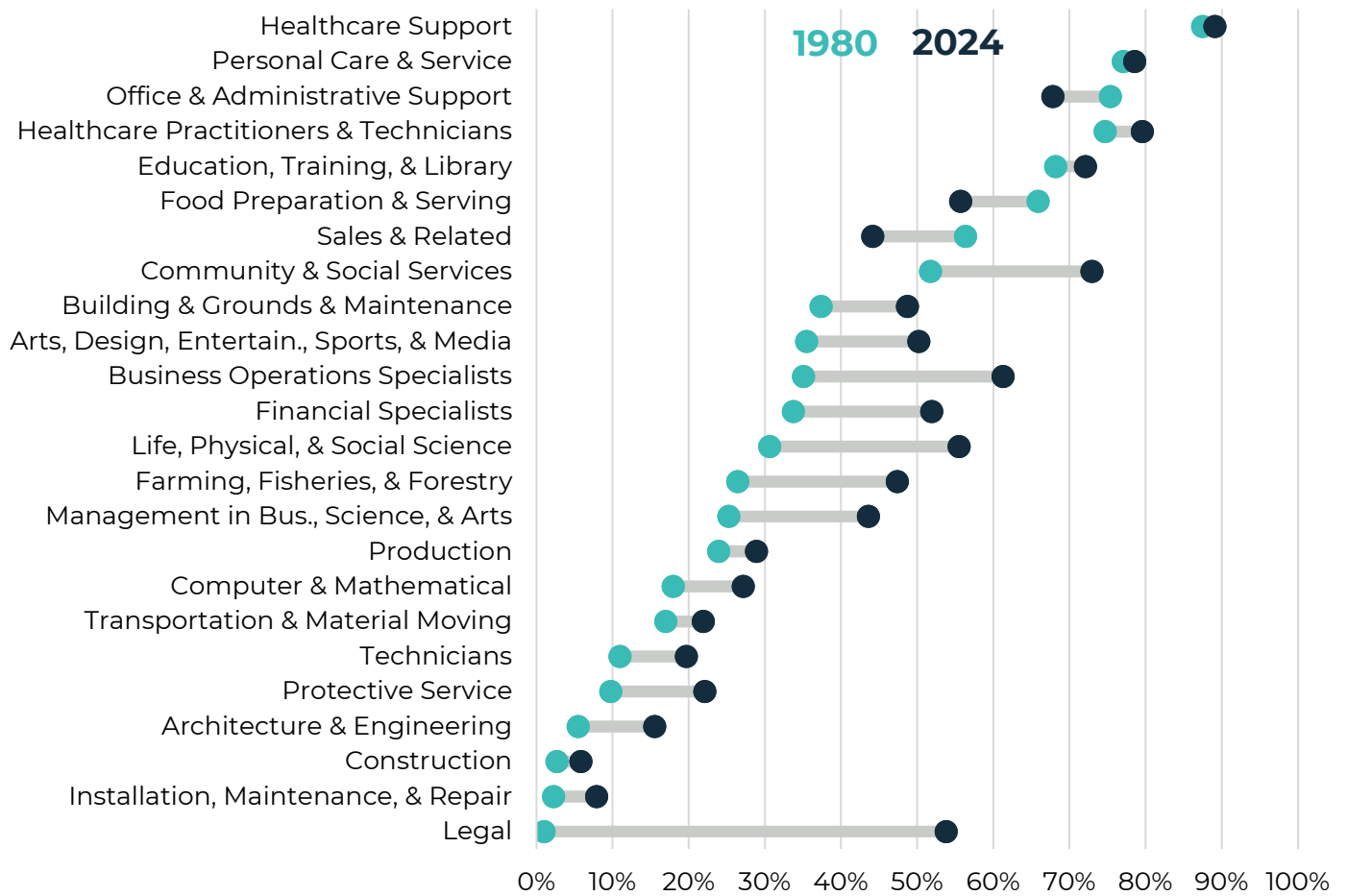
Annual Labor Force Participation Rates in Michigan by Gender (Ages 16+)



Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Women’s representation has grown remarkably in occupations they were previously underrepresented in, like *Legal* occupations.

Women’s Employment Shares in Occupational Groups in Michigan, 1980–2024



Source: One-Year Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Office and administrative support. These shifts broadly indicate movement of women into more skilled positions but can also reflect the role of structural changes in the labor market, such as automation.

Women also increased their presence in *Computer and mathematical occupations*, a STEM-related field, by 9 percentage points since 1980. Although it is encouraging to see growth in female employment in high-skill, high-wage fields, women remain less than 30 percent of the occupational group. Additionally, women are persistently underrepresented in trades-related fields. Women make up less than

a quarter of employment in *Construction* (5.8 percent); *Installation, maintenance and repair* (7.9 percent); and *Transportation and material moving* (21.9 percent). Continuing to address barriers for women will help Michigan maximize talent in the workforce.

There are many factors that contribute to challenges women may face in the labor force. Areas highlighted in this report include the presence of children, earnings discrepancies, industry employment, and more. While this report does not offer policy recommendations, it can offer insight to decision makers through concise data reporting and analysis.



Earnings and Labor Force Participation

Earnings

Women in Michigan working full-time continue to earn less than male counterparts. In 2024, women working full-time, year-round, earned approximately 79 cents per dollar that men earned. This equated to roughly \$13,700 less in annual earnings. The disparity is larger when including part-time workers, revealing a gap of nearly \$14,900 per year for Michigan women, or 71 cents per dollar.

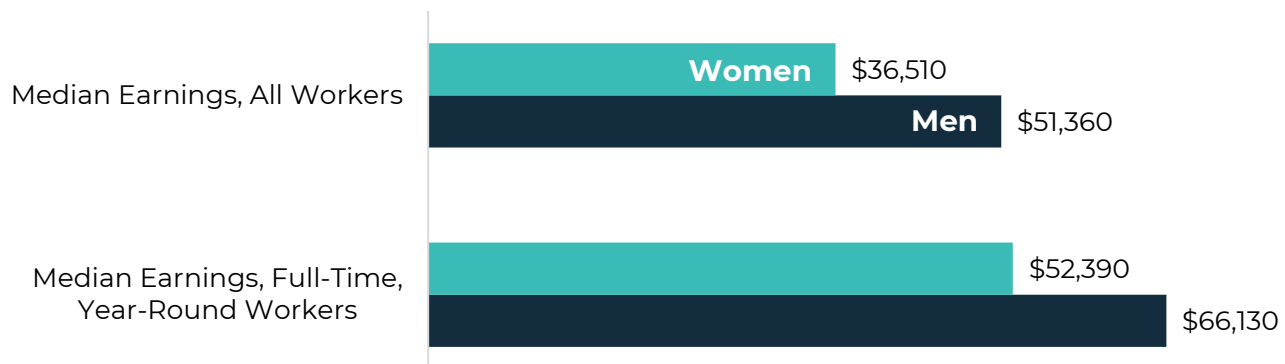
Median earnings for women who work full-time, year-round increased by 2.8 percent from \$50,990 in 2023 to \$52,390 in 2024. Comparable earnings for men in Michigan jumped by 5.9

percent to \$66,130. This led to a slight widening in the gap among full-time earners from 82 cents on the dollar in 2023 to 79 cents in 2024. The gap in 2024 is comparable to that of 2021 (78 cents on the dollar).

Reasons behind the gender pay gap are complex and difficult to pinpoint. Women are often overrepresented in lower-paying positions, more likely to leave the labor force when children are present, and frequently work fewer hours. Each of these factors contribute toward differences in earnings but do not fully capture the underlying dynamics that are less visible in data analysis.

The earnings gap between men and women in Michigan exists regardless of full-time work status.

Median Earnings in Michigan by Gender (Ages 16+)



Source: 2024 One-Year Estimates, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Labor Force Participation and the Presence of Children

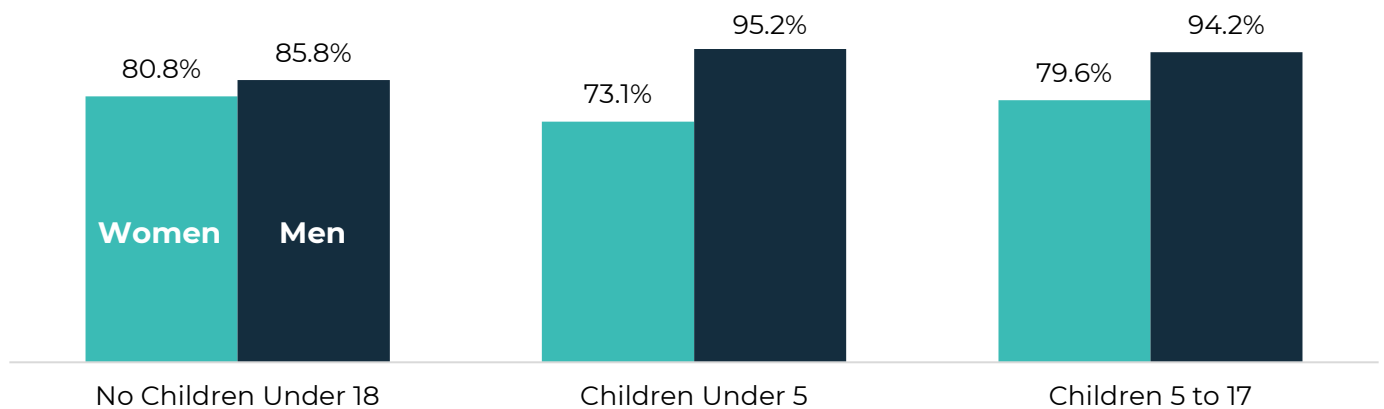
Women participate in the labor force at lower rates than men. The gap in labor force participation becomes more pronounced for parents, especially those with children under age five. In the United States, women with children under five have a participation rate over 22 percentage points lower than their male counterparts. The disparity narrows as children age. Women with school-age children are within 1.2 percentage points of women without children. However, the gaps in participation rates for women remain significant compared to men, regardless of parental status.

There are many factors that contribute to differences in labor force participation, such as paid leave, childcare costs, and scheduling conflicts. Lower participation among mothers with young children impacts the national economy in many ways, including the reduction of household income. Addressing challenges in finding high-quality, affordable, local childcare through policy can improve the outcomes of women with children and strengthen the workforce.



Having young children in the home impacts women’s labor force participation more than men’s.

2024 Average U.S. Labor Force Participation Rates for Parents and Nonparents (Ages 25–54)



Source: 2024 One-Year Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Industry Employment and Growth

Industry Employment

Michigan women are more likely to be working in service-related sectors compared to men. *Healthcare and social assistance* is overwhelmingly female dominated at 80 percent of employment in the sector. Despite making up most workers in the industry, women earn roughly 68 cents per dollar that men earn. Women are often employed in lower-paying roles, but, even in similar positions, they frequently earn less than men.

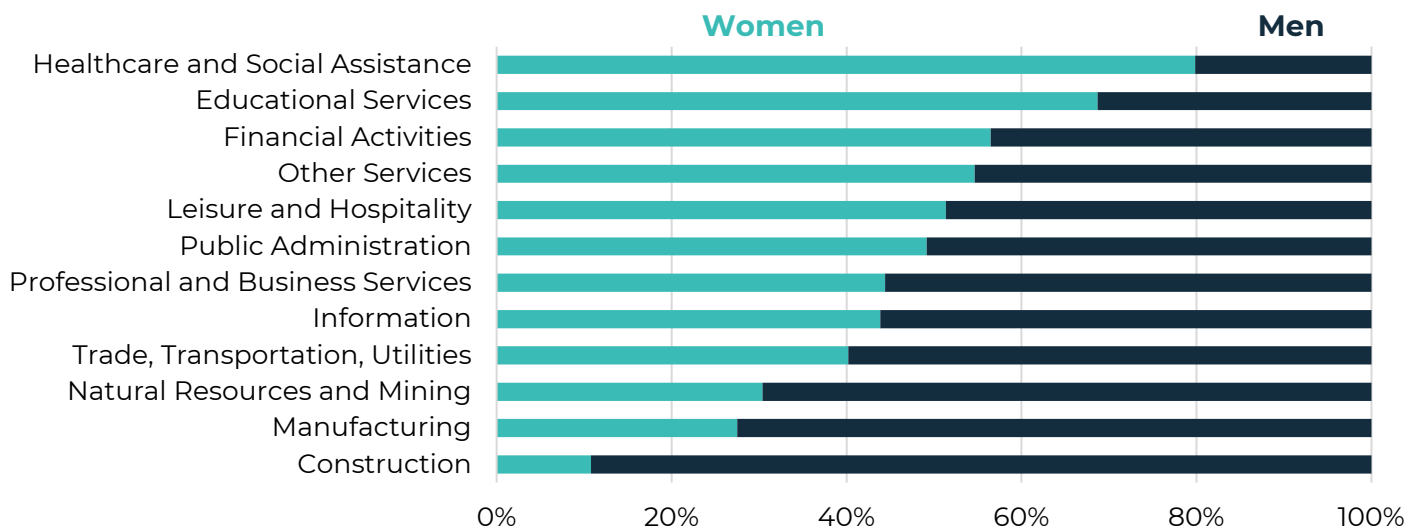
Women’s concentration in lower-paying support roles, compared to men’s presence in higher-paid specialties, contributes to wage inequities. A few of the largest occupations in *Healthcare and social assistance* are *Registered nurses*, *Home health and personal care aides*, *Nursing assistants*, *Medical assistants*, and *Pharmacy technicians*. Each listed occupation is overwhelmingly female employment and all but *Registered nurses* have

average annual wages below the statewide average (\$63,100). Occupations in the industry where men have the majority employment share are smaller and offer well-above-average earnings, like *Dentists*, *Podiatrists*, and *Optometrists*.

The industries with the greatest employment growth between 2023 and 2024 were all female-dominated: *Other services* (+7.0 percent), *Educational services* (+6.4 percent), and *Leisure and hospitality* (+6.1 percent). Within *Educational services*, female employment grew 7.6 percent, outpacing the overall industry gain and increasing their share of employment from 67.9 to 68.7 percent. *Healthcare and social assistance* grew by 0.8 percent and similar to *Educational services*, the rise of female employment was greater at 0.9 percent. These instances highlight the reliance on women in service-related sectors and their role in industry growth.

Four out of five individuals working in *Healthcare and social assistance* are women.

Michigan Industry Sectors by Gender (Ages 16+)



Source: 2024 One-Year Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

Industry Projections

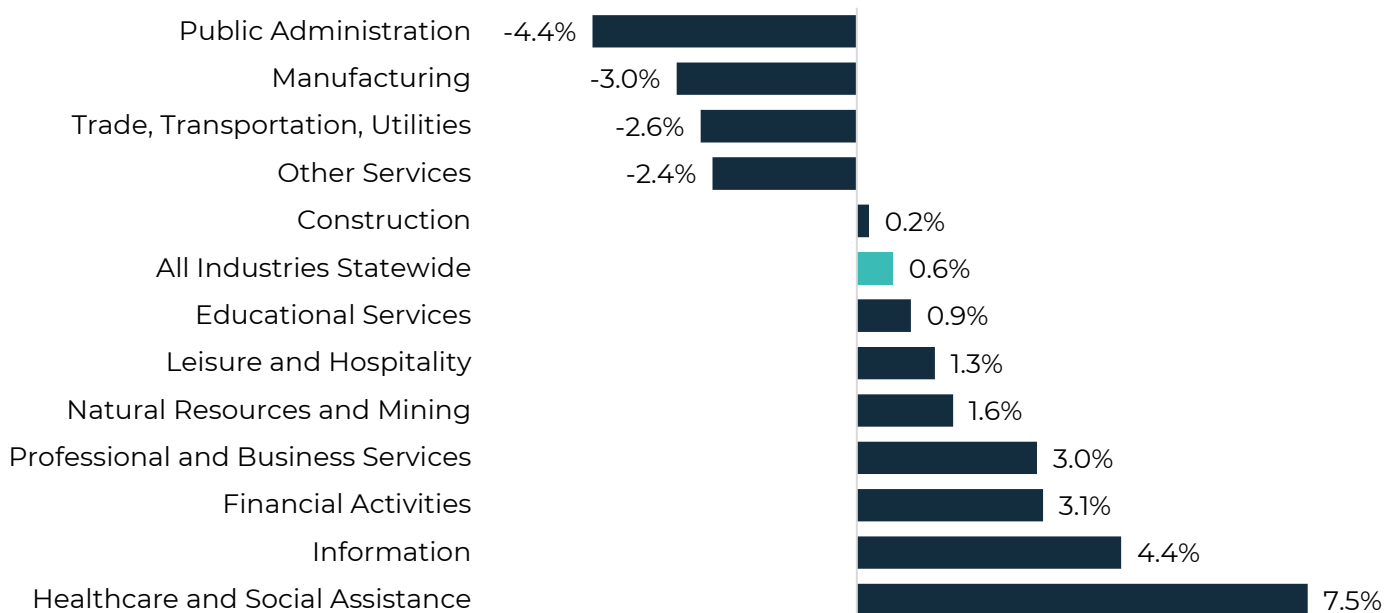
All but one majority-female industry in Michigan are projected to experience employment gains over the 2022–2032 period. Most notably, *Healthcare and social assistance* is one of the largest industry sectors in the state and has the greatest projected growth during the 10 years at 7.5 percent.

With this growth, *Healthcare and social assistance* is projected to make up nearly 15 percent of Michigan’s employment by 2032. If women maintain 80 percent of the industry employment, this will lead to an additional 37,300 Michigan women working in *Healthcare and social assistance*. Notably, much of the growth is expected to occur in occupations requiring postsecondary education or training. The industry will likely have to access new talent to fill these opportunities.

Across all industries, if employment shares among men and women remain constant over the 10-year period, and projected employment changes hold true, women’s employment will increase by roughly 35,800 and men’s will decline by 3,400. To achieve the projected growth in the state, particularly among female-dominated areas, changes will need to take place. Without an influx of women to the labor force, men may need to move into roles historically filled by women. While this may gradually improve the disparities in areas of employment, it highlights the importance of continuing to address known barriers to labor force participation for women.

Industries dominated by women are projected to experience growth in employment from 2022 to 2032.

10-Year Projected Employment Growth by Industry in Michigan



Source: 2022–2032 Long-Term Industry Projections, Michigan Center for Data and Analytics

Women in the Global Workforce

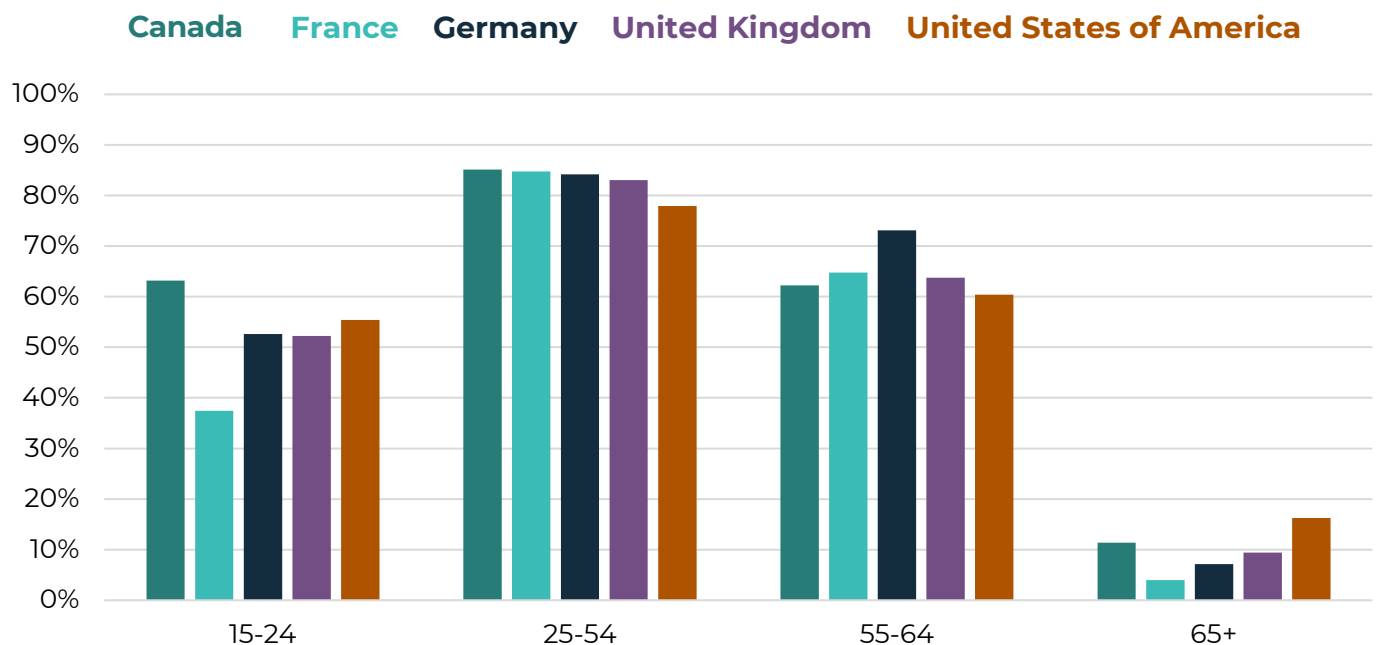
Understanding the experience of women in the workforce is not only a focus in Michigan and the United States, but across the globe as well. The International Labour Organization publishes datasets focused on gender representation in the labor force. The datasets consider a variety of factors like age or presence of children and are a way to compare the U.S. to other developed countries.

Compared to the highlighted countries, the United States has lower participation rates among women within the prime working-age group. Men, however, have rates much closer to other countries. Additionally, the U.S. has more workers over the age of 65 in their labor force. Economic necessity and social norms may factor in to how many people over 65 participate in the United States workforce.



The U.S. trails other countries in labor force participation among prime-working-age women and leads in participation among women age 65 and older.

Female Labor Force Participation Rates by Age and Country (2024)



Source: Annual Labour Force Statistics, International Labour Organization

Labor force participation among women drops with each additional child under the age of six in the home. This is evident across the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. For men in each country, there is no obvious impact on their labor force participation until they are reported to have at least three children under six. Even so, they hold rates nearly double their female counterparts.

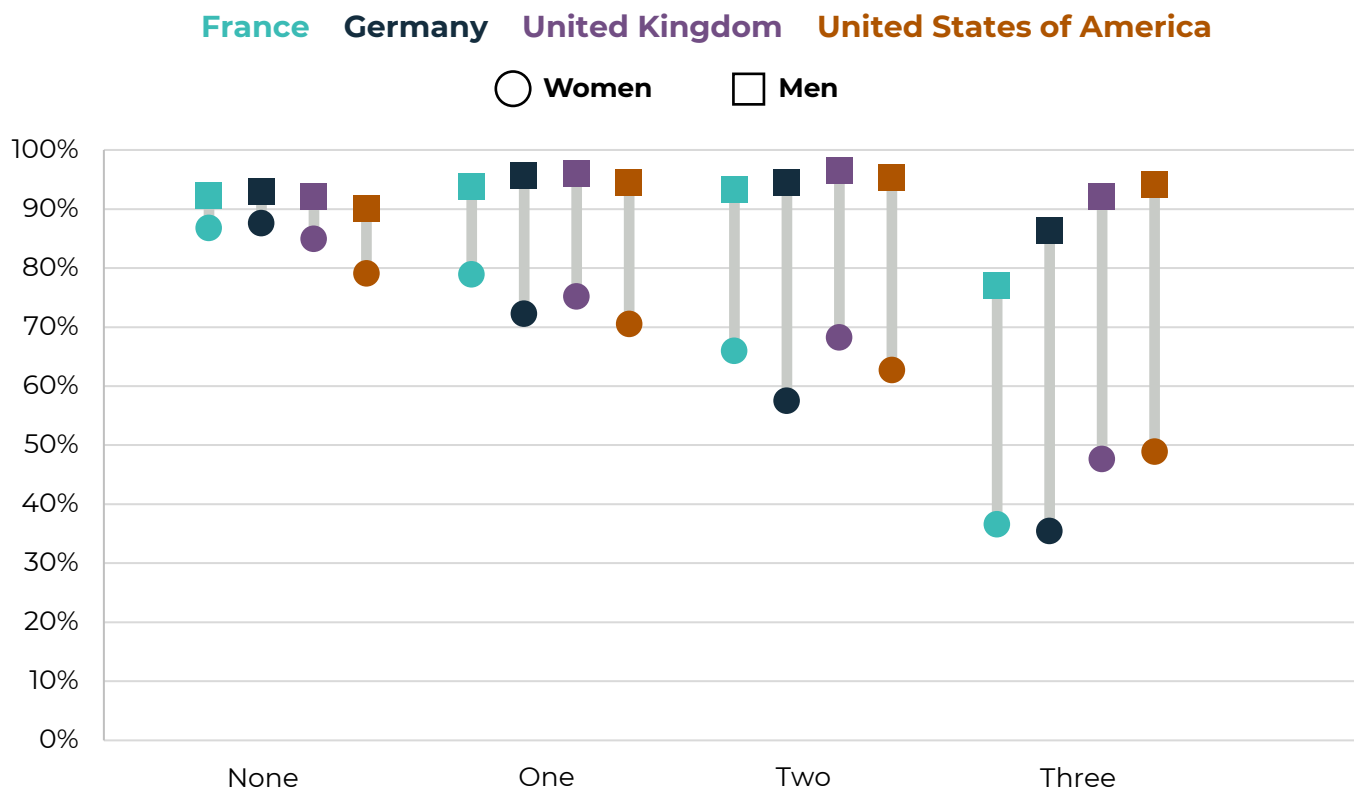
Women in the U.S. have comparable rates of participation, sometimes even lower, to women in other countries with two or fewer children under six. However, among mothers with three children under six, women in the U.S. have the

highest participation rate among the highlighted countries. It's hard to pinpoint the exact reasons for differences in maternal workforce participation across countries, but factors like culture, household income needs, job flexibility, and parental leave policies likely play a role.

The [Bipartisan Policy Center](#) published information on paid family leave across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The United States is the “only OECD member country—and one of only six countries in the world—without a national paid parental leave policy.”

With each additional child under age six in the home, the labor force participation rate for women decreases.

Labor Force Participation Rate by Number of Children Under Six, Gender, and Country (2021)



Source: Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination Indicators, International Labour Organization
 Note: Data for Canada is unavailable.



Conclusion

Women in Michigan have steadily increased their labor force presence. Still, their participation is more likely to be affected by being parents, and pay gaps remain. Many of the industries expected to grow the most in Michigan are service-related, and these jobs are mostly held by women. Addressing barriers such as childcare, pay equity, and employment outcomes are critical to improving Michigan's labor force and meeting prosperity goals.





STATE OF MICHIGAN

Department of Technology, Management & Budget
Michigan Center for Data and Analytics

Detroit Office
Cadillac Place
3032 West Grand Boulevard
Suite 9-150
Detroit, Michigan 48202

Lansing Office
George W. Romney Building, Floor 5
111 S. Capitol Ave.
Lansing, Michigan 48933
(517) 335-1130