

Access to management jobs for young men and women: apparent equality misleading

In 2013, the share of young women employed in management positions¹ three years after their entry into the labour market reached parity for the first time with that for young men. Nevertheless, their access to management jobs at the beginning of their working lives still does not match the scale of their investment in education. The process of catching up with their male counterparts by accessing management jobs in much greater numbers than previously is not keeping pace with the rise in their levels of qualification.

The goal of gender equality in the workplace has been enshrined in French legislation since the 1970s. It has also been a declared objective of the European Union since its inception and was reaffirmed in the 1990s, with the promotion of women's access to positions of responsibility occupying a central position in the Lisbon, Barcelona and Amsterdam Treaties. Nevertheless, these objectives are still far from having been attained. According to Eurostat data, women account for approximately only one third of managers. In France, women have a 30% less chance than men of becoming a cadre or entering the higher intellectual or liberal professions. They are also underrepresented in management positions in the three arms of the French civil service, despite being in the majority in the civil service workforce as a whole.

What is the situation for the more highly qualified young generations? Is the share of women accessing these positions increasing? And do young male and female managers enjoy the same terms and condition of employment and equal pay?

Analysis of Céreq's *Génération* surveys of two cohorts of young people leaving the education system twelve years apart (in 1998 and 2010) helps to shed light on these questions over the period between 2001 and 2013. An interval of three years after exiting the education system is long enough for an initial assessment of access to management positions to be conducted.

2001-2013: the shares of men and women in management positions converge

The period was marked by a number of developments. Firstly, the number of management jobs increased continuously throughout the economy. Between 2001 and 2013, the share of cadres in the employed population in France rose by five percentage points, with 20% of men and 15% of women having that status in 2013 (Insee, employment surveys). It was women who benefitted most from this rapid expansion as they succeeded in gradually moving into professional positions that were previously male preserves. Legislation introduced in order to promote equality between men and women in their working lives undoubtedly contributed to this catch-up process. After all, public policies in recent years have required companies to ensure greater equality of pay between men and women, as well as more equal access to supervisory and managerial positions. Furthermore, changes in the structure of higher education provision have helped to increase the number of young graduates potentially aspiring to jobs at cadre level.

These various advances have undoubtedly helped to increase the number of young women achieving cadre status. However, this period was also characterised by a major slowdown in economic activity caused by the financial crisis of 2008-2009. Comparison of the young people's situations three years after completing their initial education illustrates this deterioration all too clearly. ..

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GENDER
INEQUALITIES

MANAGERIAL
EMPLOYEES

GENERATION
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HIGHER
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... The shares of the two cohorts in employment fell from 82% in 2001 to just 68% in 2013, the rate for men and women being the same in that year. At the same time, the share of young people in each cohort who were unemployed doubled, from 10% to 20%. Higher education graduates, the group most likely to be employed in management jobs at the start of their working lives, suffered less from this deterioration, since their share in employment fell by only six percentage points between the two cohorts. Ultimately, the young people who left education in 2010 were 34% less likely to gain access to cadre status than their predecessors in the 1998 cohort (and this remained true for equivalent individual characteristics, cf. the model presented in Box 3).

Nevertheless, among the young people in employment in 2013, the share of women who held management jobs three years after entering the labour market had reached parity with that of men, both shares having risen to 20%, compared with 13% of women and 17% of men twelve years earlier (Table 1). In other words, for every 100 young managers, 49 were women in 2013 compared with 41 in 2001. This parity is a major first in the history of young people's education-to-work transition: never before had young women attained these positions in such large numbers, even though these results are part of a long-term trend.

Contrasting evolutions depending on occupation

Young women's progress in obtaining management jobs can be observed in most of the occupations that offer jobs of cadre status (see footnote 1). It is in the liberal professions, which account for only a modest share of the total, that women have strengthened their presence to the greatest extent, notably as a result of the increasing feminisation of the health and legal professions. In the two most emblematic occupational categories ('administrative and commercial managers/executives in the private sector'/'*Cadres administratifs et commerciaux d'entreprise*' and 'engineers and technical managers/executives in the private sector'/'*Ingénieurs et cadres techniques*'), which by themselves accounted for 61%

of the jobs held by young cadres in 2013, the share of women has increased by 6 and 7 percentage points respectively. Furthermore, a quarter of the young female cadres still held jobs in the 'teachers and scientific professions'/'*Professeure.s et professions scientifiques*' category (compared with 10 % of the men). Employment in the French civil service (whether as a tenured civil servant (*fonctionnaire*) or ordinary employee) remains a largely female preserve, whether the population in question is all higher education graduates or just young cadres. The share of women working in this sector is twice that of men.

Educational capital: a key factor in the increase in the number of female cadres

One of the key factors in narrowing the gender difference in access to the cadre category is the higher levels of education among young women and the sharp increase in the numbers of young women entering higher education in recent decades. Since the 2000s, the structure of higher education provision has changed substantially and has led to an upward shift in the levels at which young graduates leave the system, a development that has benefitted women more than men. Thus the share of young people leaving higher education with a bachelor's, master's or PhD rose between 1998 and 2010 from 23% to 27% for women, compared with a rise from 19% to 22% for men.

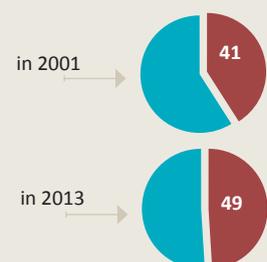
However, the share of young women has risen even more at the higher levels. While 10% of the young women and 12% of the young men in the 1998 cohort had a master's or a PhD, these shares rose to 18% and 15% respectively for the 2010 cohort. Thus the share of young women with the highest levels of education has risen particularly sharply, such that by 2010 they accounted for 37 % of graduates of the *grandes écoles* (compared with 33% for the earlier cohort), 61% of holders of master's degrees (compared with 53%) and 62% of young PhDs (compared with 52%); this feminisation is particularly marked among holders of PhDs in health disciplines.

¹ Translator's note: The French term translated here as 'management job' or 'management position' is 'emploi cadre'. 'Cadre' is a term not easily translated into English. It is commonly rendered as 'manager' or 'executive', but these terms do not really capture its full meaning. To be a 'cadre' in France is to have a different legal status from that of an 'employé'. Cadres usually have a specialist level of knowledge, seniority and/or responsibilities and are able to work autonomously and to supervise other employees. Their terms and conditions of employment differ from those of ordinary employees (longer notice period, higher minimum salary, different working time regulations, etc.).

1 Share of cadres in each cohort three years into their working lives (%)

	Situation of the 1998 cohort in 2001			Situation of the 2010 cohort in 2013		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
Young people in employment	82	78	86	68	68	68
Of which cadres	15	13	17	20	20	20
Cadres' current median salary (in euros)	1 900	1 730*	1 980	2 170	2 100	2 260
Cadres' median salary (in constant 2013 euros)	2 330	2 120	2 430	2 170	2 100	2 260

Shares of women among cadres in the cohort three years into their working lives (%)



Sources: Génération 1998 and 2010 surveys, comparable field. Field: all leavers in each cohort. For salaries: all higher education graduates in employment three years after completing their education. *In 2001, female cadres in the 1998 cohort earned a median salary of 1,730 euros, or 2,120 euros at 2013 purchasing power parity. Cumulative inflation between 2001 and 2013 was approximately 23%.

For a given level of qualification, a reduction in the differences in access to the cadre category

The greater increase in levels of qualification among young women is a vector for the advances in their access to the cadre category. Overall, the share of cadres among young graduates rose by 6 percentage points for women over the period to reach 29%, while it remained relatively stable for men, falling from 37 % in 2001 to 36% in 2013. The rise in educational levels was also accompanied by a reduction in the differences, for a given level of qualification, between men and women in access to the cadre category (cf. Table 2 below). Although differences can still be observed to the detriment of women for the same level of education— expect for PhDs – they were much smaller in 2013 than in 2001.

Nevertheless, these differences are still significant given the higher share of women among graduates. Young female graduates should have a greater presence in the cadre category than they actually have. All other things being equal, and particularly for the same level of qualification, they actually have less chance than their male counterparts of obtaining a management position during the first three years of their working lives. Nevertheless, this penalisation of women has softened: while they had a 52% less chance of being a cadre in 2001, they were only 32% less likely to be in such a position in 2013.

Pay gap narrowing but less advantageous employment contracts for women

Increasing awareness among the public authorities and employers of the disparities in pay between men and women has not been without effect, it would seem, since women’s pay is tending to converge with that of men, both for young cadres and for the whole of the graduate population.

For young cadres, the median salary for women was equivalent to 93% of the median male salary in

2013, compared with 87% in 2001, for full-timers and part-timers together (cf. Table 1). This trend towards convergence is primarily the result of strong pay progression in two occupational categories, namely ‘teachers and scientific professions’, in which women’s median salary rose from 91% of the male median in 2001 to 100% in 2013, and ‘administrative and commercial managers/executives in the private sector’, in which women’s relative median salary rose by 4 percentage points, rising from 89% to 93% between 2001 and 2013. For the other occupational categories, men’s and women’s salaries have remained close from one cohort to the other. For example, the salaries of female engineers and technical managers/executives in the private sector are still equivalent to 95% of those of their male counterparts.

For all that, can it be concluded that the gender pay gap has narrowed even though men’s pay has continued to progress at the same rate as in the past? Nothing could be less certain, to judge from the decline in constant euros in the salaries of young cadres between the two cohorts, a decline that has affected men much more severely than women, with cuts of 7% and 1% respectively. In other words, the pay restraint that affected male cadres more than their female counterparts between 2001 and 2013, as a result in particular of the 2008 financial crisis and its repercussions on employment in manufacturing industry, has been one of the factors driving pay convergence. When all is said and done, however, this tendency towards convergence does seem to be part of a long-term trend, to which recent legislative advances in favour of equality between men and women in the workplace have also contributed.

When it comes to employment contracts, precariousness is, generally speaking, less frequent among cadres than among the graduate population as a whole. However, even in these jobs, women are systematically at greater risk of precariousness than men. Thus 24% of young female cadres were on fixed-term contracts in 2001 and 32% in 2012 (compared with 15% and 20% respectively of men). ...

2 Share of cadres among higher education graduates in employment three years after completion of their initial education (%)

	In 2001 1998 cohort		In 2013 2010 cohort	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
DEUG - BTS - DUT	3	9	5	11
General bachelor’s degree (bac +3)	17*	25	15	25
Vocational bachelor’s degree (bac + 3)	-	-	15	17
1-year master’s	34	45	33	44
Master’s, DEA, DESS (2-year master’s)	58	78	59	67
Business schools	74	84	65	68
Engineering schools	80	95	83	90
PhD	93	95	96	96
All higher education graduates	23	37	29	36

DEUG • 2-year general degree; level III in the French qualification system.

BTS • A national higher education diploma requiring 2 years’ post-secondary education/training; level III in the French qualification system.

DUT • two-year degree in technology; level III in the French qualification system.

DEA • 5-years post-secondary education; now replaced by 2-year research master’s

DESS • - 5-years post-secondary education; now replaced by 2-year research master’s.

Sources: Génération 1998 and 2010 surveys, comparable field.

Field: all higher education graduates in employment 3 years after completion of their education.

* In 2001, of the young women in the 1998 cohort holding a general bachelor’s degree and, 17% were cadres.

Céreq's *Génération* surveys, which are conducted at regular intervals, observe the entry into working life of the whole of a cohort that left the education system in the same year. They contribute to understanding of the diversity of individual trajectories in the light of the type of initial education pursued, various personal characteristics and the economic and social context.

This study compares the situations of the 1998 and 2010 cohorts after three years in the labour market, on the basis of a representative sample of the 700,000 young people who left the education system in those years. The fields of the two surveys are comparable and exclude individuals leaving the French primary and secondary teacher training establishments.

Cadres are identified by the code 3 in the single-digit PCS2003 classification. *Cadres* with supervisory responsibilities have actual supervisory responsibilities for one or more subordinates.

Some results are based on logistic regressions in which the dependent variable corresponds to access to cadre status and in which the following variables are included as explanatory variables:

- level and field of education, social background, having a child;
- variables linked to educational trajectory: delayed entry to secondary school, delay in taking the baccalaureate, preparatory class for the *grandes écoles*, regular work experience while at university;
- variables linked to employment trajectories: experience of discrimination; number of months' unemployment over the 3 years, etc.;

Setting the two cohorts alongside each other and the introduction of interactions between gender and cohort make it possible to show how this access has varied from one generation to the other and by gender.

For further details on the *Génération* surveys: www.cereq.fr

... Similarly, part-time working, although it is less widespread among female cadres than in the other socio-occupational categories, is concentrated primarily among the women. In 2013, approximately 9% of female cadres or cadres with supervisory responsibilities were working part-time, compared with 3% and 1% respectively of their male counterparts.

For all young cadres, including those with managerial or supervisory responsibilities, certain conditions of employment, such as the type of employment contract, still work to the disadvantage of women, even though in terms of pay men's and women's situations have tended to converge.

Despite this convergence, however, there are still some gaps to be closed before equality is achieved. Although the share of young women with *cadre* status had equalled that of young men by 2013, they are still underrepresented if their levels of qualification are taken into account. Given the characteristics of these young people's initial education, therefore, this apparent equality conceals the fact that the odds are still stacked against women when it comes to obtaining *cadre* status.

At this point, moreover, these young people were still in the very early stages of family formation and the extent to which marriage or moving in with a partner, and particularly the arrival of children, adversely affects women's careers and promotion prospects is well known. The outcomes of the interactions between the events of married and family life and each partner's career very seldom benefit women's careers. Thus the odds are that the results of the new survey of this cohort carried out in the autumn of 2017 (i.e. seven years after they entered the labour market) will not show that this progress in gender equality, notable though it may be, has been maintained as the cohort gets older. [n](#)

Further reading

« Les femmes dans les filières et les métiers masculins : des paroles et des actes », D. Epiphane, *Travail Genre et Sociétés*, n° 36/2016, novembre 2016.

« Le salaire moindre des femmes : une question d'individu ou de profession? », A. Dupray et S. Moulet, *Travail et Emploi*, n°144, p. 81-107, 2015.

Women earned on average 16% less than men in 2013 in the EU, Eurostat, newsrelease, 41/2015, 5 mars 2015.

Devenir cadre par la promotion, M. Möbus, Céreq Nef, n°47, octobre 2011.

« La féminisation de la catégorie des cadres au miroir de l'insertion des jeunes », D. Epiphane, in M. Arliaud, H. Eckert (coord.), *Quand les jeunes entrent dans l'emploi*, p. 151-170, La Dispute, Paris, 2002.