



Fact Sheet

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The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation

The gender wage gap and occupational segregation – men primarily working in occupations done by other men, and women primarily working with other women – are persistent features of the US labor market. During 2010, median weekly earnings for female full-time workers were \$669, compared with \$824 per week for men, a gender wage ratio of 81.2 percent (Table 1; or a gender wage gap of 18.8 percent). Women's median earnings are lower than men's in nearly all occupations, whether they work in occupations predominantly done by women, occupations predominantly done by men, or occupations with a more even mix of men and women. Four of ten women (41.1 percent) work in traditionally female occupations, and close to five of ten male workers (49.3 percent) work in traditionally male occupations.¹ Typically, male dominated occupations pay more than female dominated occupations at similar skill levels (Hegewisch et al. 2010). Tackling occupational segregation is an important part of tackling the gender wage gap.

Women Earn Less than Men in (Almost) All Occupations

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in 2010 collected data on employment and weekly earnings for 501 different occupations. In 111 of these occupations there is enough data to estimate median weekly earnings for both men and women and calculate the female/male earnings ratio.² Of these 111 occupations, there are only four in which women's weekly median earnings are higher than men's.³ The occupation where women's earnings are higher than men's by the largest margin is 'combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food', with median earnings for full-time work of only \$369 (data not shown in Tables), barely enough to keep a family of three above the official poverty threshold.⁴ At the other end of the spectrum, the occupation with the biggest gender wage gap for women, is 'personal financial advisors', with average median weekly earnings for full-time work of \$1,381 for all workers, and a female/male earnings ratio of 58.4 percent, a gender wage gap of 41.6 percent.⁵

Women Earn Less than Men in the Most Common Occupations

The ten most common occupations for women employ 28.8 percent of all female full-time workers. Median weekly earnings for women range from \$1,039 for 'registered nurses' to \$427 for 'nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides' (Table 1). Women earn less than men in each of these occupations; the gender wage ratio ranges from 74.9 percent for 'accountants and auditors' to 95.4 percent for 'customer service representatives.'

For men, the ten most common occupations employ 20.0 percent of all male full-time workers. Median weekly earnings for men range from \$2,217 for 'chief executives' and \$1,590 for 'computer software engineers' to \$508 for 'laborers and freight, stock, and material movers' (Table 1). Women earn less than men in each of these occupations (although there are too few women 'construction laborers' to calculate a gender wage ratio there).

Table 1: The Wage Gap in the Ten Most Common Occupations for Women and Men (Full-Time Workers Only), 2010

	Men's median weekly earnings	Women's median weekly earnings	Women's earnings as percent of men's	Share of female workers in occupation	Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
	\$824	\$669	81.2%	44.7%	100%	100%
10 most common occupations for women						
All female workers (44,472,000)						
Secretaries and administrative assistants	\$725	\$657	90.6%	95.7%	0.2%	5.2%
Registered nurses	\$1,201	\$1,039	86.5%	90.5%	0.4%	4.4%
Elementary and middle school teachers	\$1,024	\$931	90.9%	80.9%	0.8%	4.4%
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides	\$488	\$427	87.5%	87.0%	0.3%	2.6%
Customer service representatives	\$614	\$586	95.4%	66.2%	0.9%	2.3%
First-line supervisors/managers of retail sales workers	\$782	\$578	73.9%	45.5%	2.1%	2.2%
Cashiers	\$400	\$366	91.5%	71.5%	0.7%	2.1%
First-line supervisors/managers of office and administrative workers	\$890	\$726	81.6%	66.9%	0.8%	2.0%
Receptionists and information clerks	\$547	\$529	96.7%	92.5%	0.1%	1.8%
Accountants and auditors	\$1,273	\$953	74.9%	59.1%	1.0%	1.8%
<i>Sum</i>					7.4%	28.8%
10 most common occupations for men						
All male workers (55,059,000)						
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	\$691	\$492	71.2%	3.3%	4.2%	0.2%
Managers, all other	\$1,395	\$1,045	74.9%	36.6%	2.2%	1.6%
First-line supervisors/managers of retail sales workers	\$782	\$578	73.9%	45.5%	2.1%	2.2%
Janitors and building cleaners	\$494	\$400	81.0%	28.5%	2.0%	1.0%
Retail salespersons	\$651	\$421	64.7%	42.1%	1.8%	1.7%
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	\$508	\$419	82.5%	15.8%	1.8%	0.4%
Construction laborers	\$569	*	*	2.2%	1.6%	0.0%
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing	\$983	\$842	85.7%	24.0%	1.5%	0.6%
Computer software engineers	\$1,590	\$1,445	90.9%	20.6%	1.4%	0.4%
Chief executives	\$2,217	\$1,598	72.1%	25.6%	1.4%	0.6%
<i>Sum</i>					20.0%	8.7%

Note: * Earnings data are made available only where there are an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers in an occupation.

Source: IWPR compilation of data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2010.

"Household Data Annual Averages. Table 39." <<http://www.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aat39.txt>> (retrieved February 2011).

Women Earn Less than Men in the Highest Paying Occupations

The ten occupations with the highest median weekly earnings for full-time work employ almost three times more men than women, and account for 5.75 percent of all male full-time workers and 2.6 percent of all female full-time workers (data not shown in Tables). The occupation with the highest earnings for women is ‘physicians and surgeons’, with median weekly earnings for women of \$1,618, closely followed by ‘pharmacists’ and ‘chief executives’ (Table 2). With two notable exceptions, ‘physical therapists’ and ‘speech language pathologists’, women are a minority of workers in the highest paying occupations for women; two of these occupations, both in computing, are ‘non-traditional’ occupations for women, and both have a comparatively low gender wage gap (Table 2).

Six of the highest earning occupations for women are also in the top-ten list for men (Table 3), but men are a majority of workers in each of the highest paid occupations for men. In two of these occupations, ‘engineering managers’ and ‘aerospace engineers,’ there are too few women to calculate a gender earnings ratio; in five of the remaining occupations the female/male wage ratio is below 81.2 percent (the average weekly female/male wage ratio for all full-time workers). The two occupations with the lowest gender wage gap among these high paid occupations, both above 90 percent, are in computing and information technology, a field which traditionally has a lower gender wage gaps than other Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) occupations.

Women Earn Less than Men in the Lowest Paying Occupations

The ten occupations with the lowest weekly median earnings for full-time work employ twice as many women as men, and account for 4.6 percent of all full-time female, compared to 1.9 percent of all male full-time employees (data not shown in Tables). Women’s median earnings for full-time work in the lowest paid occupations for women ranges from \$309 for ‘counter attendants, cafeteria, food and coffee shop workers’ to \$381 for ‘waitresses’ and ‘cooks’ (Table 2). ‘Childcare workers’ were among the ten lowest paid occupations in 2009, and just missed the 2010 list with median weekly earnings for women of \$398 (data not shown in Tables). In two of the lowest paid occupations for women, ‘laundry and dry cleaning workers’ and ‘graders and sorters, agricultural products’ there are too few male workers to calculate the female/male earnings ratio; in the others, women’s median earnings are lower than men’s, although the gender wage gap is much less marked than in higher paying occupations. In three of these occupations, women would not make enough, even working full-time, every week of the year, to keep a family of three out of poverty; in none of these are median female earnings high enough to keep a family of four out of poverty.⁴

The ten occupations with the lowest earnings for men likewise are very low paid, and none of them, on median weekly male earnings, would provide enough annual income to keep a family of four out of poverty (Table 3). Yet the range of earnings is higher than the range for women, proportionately fewer men than women work in these occupations, and, with one exception, male median earnings are higher than those of women (Table 3).

Table 2: Occupations with the Highest and Lowest Median Weekly Earnings for Women (Full-Time Workers Only), 2010

10 Highest Paying Occupations	Women's median weekly earnings	Men's median weekly earnings	Women's earnings as percent of men's	Share of female workers in occupation	Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
Physicians and surgeons	\$1,618	\$2,278	71.0%	31.2%	0.8%	0.4%
Pharmacists	\$1,605	\$1,930	83.2%	47.6%	0.2%	0.2%
Chief executives	\$1,598	\$2,217	72.1%	25.6%	1.4%	0.6%
Lawyers	\$1,461	\$1,895	77.1%	35.0%	0.8%	0.5%
Computer software engineers	\$1,445	\$1,590	90.9%	20.6%	1.4%	0.4%
Computer and information systems managers	\$1,415	\$1,729	81.8%	30.1%	0.6%	0.3%
Physical therapists	\$1,208	*	*	61.9%	0.1%	0.2%
Speech-language pathologists	\$1,184	*	*	96.7%	0.0%	0.2%
Computer programmers	\$1,177	\$1,243	94.7%	22.4%	0.6%	0.2%
Human resources managers	\$1,170	\$1,458	80.2%	71.0%	0.1%	0.4%
<i>Sum</i>					6.0%	3.5%
10 Lowest Paying Occupation	Women's median weekly earnings	Men's median weekly earnings	Women's earnings as percent of men's	Share of female workers in occupation	Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
Counter attendants, cafeteria, food concession, and coffee shop	\$309	*	*	71.3%	0.0%	0.1%
Dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers	\$343	\$396	86.6%	45.9%	0.1%	0.2%
Miscellaneous agricultural workers	\$349	\$415	84.1%	15.3%	0.8%	0.2%
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	\$361	*	*	59.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Cashiers	\$366	\$400	91.5%	71.5%	0.7%	2.1%
Food preparation workers	\$367	\$390	94.1%	48.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	\$376	\$455	82.6%	84.2%	0.2%	1.4%
Waiters and Waitresses	\$381	\$450	84.7%	65.3%	0.5%	1.2%
Cooks	\$381	\$401	95.0%	37.7%	1.3%	1.0%
Graders and Sorters, agricultural products	\$381	*	*	64.3%	0.1%	0.1%
<i>Sum</i>					3.7%	5.5%

Note: * Data are made available only where there are an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers in an occupation. Source: IWPR compilation of data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2010. *Household Data Annual Averages. Table 39.* <bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aat39.txt> (retrieved February 2011).

Table 3: Occupations with the highest and lowest median weekly earnings for men (Full-Time Workers Only), 2010

10 Highest Paying Occupations	Men's median weekly earnings	Women's median weekly earnings	Women's earnings as percent of men's	Share of male workers in occupation	Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
Physicians and surgeons	\$2,278	\$1,618	71.0%	68.8%	0.8%	0.4%
Chief executives	\$2,217	\$1,598	72.1%	74.4%	1.4%	0.6%
Pharmacists	\$1,930	\$1,605	83.2%	52.4%	0.2%	0.2%
Lawyers	\$1,895	\$1,461	77.1%	65.1%	0.8%	0.5%
Engineering managers	\$1,888	*	*	92.5%	0.2%	0.0%
Computer and information systems managers	\$1,729	\$1,415	81.8%	69.9%	0.6%	0.3%
Aerospace engineers	\$1,662	*	*	91.7%	0.2%	*
Personal financial advisors	\$1,647	\$962	58.4%	67.2%	0.4%	0.2%
Computer software engineers	\$1,590	\$1,445	90.9%	79.4%	1.4%	0.4%
Management Analysts	\$1,554	\$1,164	74.9%	53.3%	0.4%	0.4%
<i>Sum</i>					5.9%	2.8%

10 Lowest Paying Occupations	Men's median weekly earnings	Women's median weekly earnings	Women's earnings as percent of men's	Share of male workers in occupation	Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
Dishwashers	\$327	*	*	79.2%	0.2%	0.0%
Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food	\$346	\$388	112.1%	39.7%	0.1%	0.2%
Food preparation workers	\$390	\$367	94.1%	51.7%	0.3%	0.3%
Dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers	\$396	\$343	86.6%	54.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Cashiers	\$400	\$366	91.5%	28.5%	0.7%	2.1%
Cooks	\$401	\$381	95.0%	62.3%	1.3%	1.0%
Service station attendants	\$406	*	*	87.7%	0.1%	0.0%
Packers and packagers, hand	\$413	\$389	94.2%	46.0%	0.3%	0.4%
Personal and home care aides	\$414	\$405	97.8%	15.8%	0.1%	0.9%
Miscellaneous agricultural workers	\$415	\$349	84.1%	84.7%	0.8%	0.2%
<i>Sum</i>					4.0%	5.4%

Note: * Data are made available only where there are an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers in an occupation. Source: IWPR compilation of data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2010. *Household Data Annual Averages. Table 39.* <bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aat39.txt> (retrieved February 2011).

The Gender Wage Gap and Racial/ Ethnic Background

The gender wage gap differs by race and ethnic background. Hispanic/Latina women have the lowest earnings, at \$509 per week, 59.8 percent of the median weekly earnings of White men; African American women have median weekly earnings of \$592, 69.6% of median weekly earnings of White men. Asians have the highest median weekly earnings, for both men and women. With the exception of White workers, the gender wage gap within each race or ethnic group is narrower than the wage gap for the whole population. More detailed information is available in IWPR's Fact Sheet *The Gender Wage Gap: 2010*.⁶

The sample size in the Current Population Survey is not sufficient to provide reliable estimates of the occupational wage gap by gender, race and ethnicity at the level of occupational detail used above. Data for broad occupational groups suggest that earnings differences by gender, race and ethnic background are both due to the greater likelihood of women of color working in service occupations, which have the lowest median earnings overall, but also because there are marked differences within occupational groupings, with Latinas and Hispanic women having the lowest median weekly earnings in each group, whether in services or 'management, business and financial occupations' (Table 4).

Conclusions

Our examination of earnings differences within occupations shows that the gender earnings gap is as much due to pay differences within occupations as it is due to differences in pay between occupations. The gender wage gap is evident in both the highest and lowest paying occupations for women. With a few exceptions, occupations which employ more men tend to provide higher earnings, particularly in high-earnings occupations. Closing the gender wage gap requires challenging occupational segregation, as well as the factors that lead to wage differentials within occupations. Closing the gender wage gap also requires effective enforcement of labor and equal employment opportunity regulations, so that women may choose the occupations they would like to work in, free of discrimination and harassment; it requires the enforcement of equal pay laws so that women and men can be sure they are paid fairly for their skills, experience and performance and not on the bases of their sex, age, race or ethnic background; and it requires better career advice so that potential earnings are part of the available information used when people choose their careers.

References

Hegewisch, Ariane, Hannah Liepmann, Jeffrey Hayes, and Heidi Hartmann. 2010. "Separate and Not Equal? Gender Segregation in the Labor Market and the Gender Wage Gap." *IWPR Briefing Paper*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research

Table 4: Median Weekly Earnings for Male and Female Workers, by broad occupational classification and Race and Ethnic Background (Full-Time Workers Only), 2010

Female Workers Occupation	White Women (non-Hispanic only)		Black or African American Women*		Asian Women		Latina or Hispanic women	
	Median weekly earnings (\$)	White women in occupation as % of all female white workers	Median weekly earnings (\$)	African American women in occupation as % of all female black workers	Median weekly earnings (\$)	Asian women in occupation as % of all female Asian workers	Median weekly earnings (\$)	Latina women in occupation as % of all female Latina workers
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	\$994	17.7%	\$925	12.2%	\$1,160	15.55%	\$798	10.6%
Professional and related occupations	\$922	31.95%	\$764	26.1%	\$1,132	34.75%	\$782	16.7%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	\$633	0.8%	\$616	0.8%	\$406	0.8%	\$362	1.8%
Office and administrative support occupations	\$618	23.6%	\$612	21.5%	\$667	15.0%	\$577	23.2%
Sales and related occupations	\$566	9.4%	\$422	7.89%	\$594	8.5%	\$437	9.15%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	\$508	4.4%	\$469	7.0%	\$479	7.75%	\$385	11.0%
Service occupations	\$451	12.0%	\$420	24.5%	\$473	17.7%	\$387	27.5%

Male Workers Occupation	White Men (non-Hispanic only)		Black or African American Men*		Asian Men		Latino or Hispanic Men	
	Median weekly earnings	White men in occupation as % of all male white workers	Median weekly earnings	African American men in occupation as % of all male black workers	Median weekly earnings	Asian men in occupation as % of all male Asian workers	Median weekly earnings	Latino men in occupation as % of all male Latino workers
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	\$1,418	18.6%	\$1,027	9.8%	\$1,439	14.3%	\$1,026	7.3%
Professional and related occupations	\$1,221	20.9%	\$933	15.0%	\$1,396	36.1%	\$970	8.2%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	\$812	16.5%	\$707	12.0%	\$733	6.8%	\$538	26.3%
Office and administrative support occupations	\$711	6.25%	\$584	10.5%	\$734	6.7%	\$578	7.1%
Sales and related occupations	\$873	10.4%	\$619	6.6%	\$694	8.8%	\$606	6.1%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	\$721	17.1%	\$576	26.3%	\$596	12.4%	\$510	24.5%
Service occupations	\$618	10.3%	\$498	19.75%	\$555	14.9%	\$437	20.5%

Note: * Data for Black or African Americans may include Black Hispanics or Latinos.

Source: IWPR compilation of data based on US Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Table A-2. Usual weekly earnings of employed full-time wage and salary workers by intermediate occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and Non-Hispanic ethnicity, Annual Average 2010.*

Notes

The weekly earnings data in this factsheet are based on the Current Populations Survey (CPS) and refer to full-time (working 35 hours or more per week) wage and salary workers age 16 and older (excluding the self-employed); please note that annual earnings data for 2010 (which include workers 15 years and older as well as the self-employed, but exclude workers who do not have earnings for at least 50 weeks of the year) are not available until Fall 2011; the gender wage gap based on annual earnings, 23 percent in 2009, based on a female/male earnings ratio of 77 percent, is typically slightly larger than the weekly earnings wage gap.

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¹ The definition of traditional/non-traditional occupations as having at least 75 percent of the workers of one gender is provided in the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 S.250-6. Data are for full-time workers only. If full-time and part-time workers are included, 40.4 percent of women, and 44.1 percent of men work in traditional occupations for their sex; 5.7 percent of women work in non-traditional occupations, and 4.7 percent of men (IWPR compilation of data based on US Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Table 11. Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, Annual Average 2010.* <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>).

² For the BLS to publish estimated earnings, there must be at least 50,000 people in a category. Because so few women work in construction, for example, published data do not allow us to estimate the gender earnings ratio. Conversely, because there are heavily female dominated occupations, there are no published estimates for male earnings in many health care and personal service occupations.

³ Occupations with higher median earnings for women than men (female/male earnings ratios and full-time median weekly female earnings in brackets) are: 'combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food' (112.1 percent, \$388); 'bill and account collectors' (109.5 percent, \$634); 'stock clerks and order fillers' (105.1 percent, \$495); and 'counselors' (104.9 percent, \$818).

⁴ In 2010, the poverty threshold, as set by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, was \$18,310 for a household of three, and \$22,050 for a household of four (see <<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/10poverty.shtml>>, accessed April 7, 2011). To be above the poverty line for three would require average earnings of at least \$352 for 52 weeks for a sole breadwinner with a three-person family, and of \$424 with a four-person family.

⁵ The four occupations with the largest gender wage gap are (female/male earnings ratio and full-time median weekly female earnings in brackets): 'Personal financial advisors' (58.4 percent, \$962); 'securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents' (62.7 percent, \$892); 'retail sales person' (64.7 percent, \$421); 'property, real estate, and community association managers' (65.35 percent, \$726).

⁶ The fact sheet is available at < <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/the-gender-wage-gap-2010-updated-march-2011>>.