



**Wider
Opportunities
for Women**

Myths and Facts about Women and Nontraditional Occupations

There many myths about whether women can or should work in jobs that are considered non-traditional for them. Here, we dispel some of these common myths about women working in male dominated NTOs with the facts.

MYTH 1: WOMEN ARE IN THE LABOR FORCE TO EARN SOME EXTRA SPENDING MONEY.

FACT: The majority of women work due to economic need with women and men contributing just about equally in households with children¹. Two-earner families are more the norm among married couples. In 2006, 69 percent of married mothers were employed outside the home², emphasizing that a majority of American families rely on two incomes.

Single women's particularly urgent need for good jobs is demonstrated by the fact that 38.5 percent of all female headed family households lived in poverty in 2009.

MYTH 2: WOMEN AND MEN ARE REPRESENTED EQUALLY IN MOST OCCUPATIONS.

FACT: Women workers continue to be concentrated in traditionally female occupations. In 2008, women accounted for nearly 39.5percent of persons employed in management, professional, and related occupations; 33.1 percent of those in sales and office occupations; and 20.6 percent of service occupations. 5.9 percent of employed women worked in production, transportation, and material moving occupations while only .9 percent worked in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations⁴.

In 2008, women held 96.1 percent of all available secretary and administrative assistant positions, 81.2 percent of all elementary and middle school teaching positions, 88.7 percent of all Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides positions, 75.5 percent of the nation's cashier positions, and 68.3 percent of all available customer service representative positions⁵.

For comparison, in 2008, women only made up 20.9 percent of all computer software engineers, 6.7 percent of all mechanical engineers, 4.9 percent of all Driver/sales workers and truck drivers, 2.5 percent of all general maintenance and repair workers, 1 percent of electricians, 1.5 percent of carpenters, 1.4 percent of Pipe layers, plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters, and only 0.4 percent of all Brick masons, block masons, and stonemasons.

MYTH 3: JOBS IN WHICH WOMEN ARE TRADITIONALLY EMPLOYED PAY SALARIES COMPARABLE TO JOBS IN WHICH MEN ARE TRADITIONALLY EMPLOYED.

FACT: Jobs in which men are traditionally employed typically pay 20 to 30 percent more than traditionally female jobs.

Overall, in 2009 the median weekly earnings of women who were fulltime wage and salary workers was \$657, or 80 percent of men's \$819 due in part to the concentration of women in low wage work⁷.

Data shows that male-dominated jobs pay an average median hourly wage of \$17.35, while the traditionally female-held occupations pay just \$13.85 hourly on average. This translates into a median annual salary of \$36,085 for men and \$28,805 for women – a yearly wage gap of \$7,280.

In 2008, three common traditional jobs for women receptionist, Preschool and kindergarten teachers and home health aide, paid median weekly earnings of \$502, \$589 and \$424 respectively⁹. During the same year, computer programmers, electricians, and Operating engineers and other construction equipment operators,