

THE WEEKLY GENDER WAGE GAP BY RACE AND ETHNICITY: 2020

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As lowest paid women lost most jobs, the gender wage gap for full-time workers shrank for all women and men, and by race & ethnicity.

- In 2020, the weekly gender wage gap for all full-time workers shrank to 17.7 percent from 18.5 percent in 2019, as a result of disproportionately large COVID-19 related job losses for women in the lowest paid jobs.
- COVID-19 related disproportionate job losses also led to a fall in the weekly gender wage gaps by race/ethnicity for women of all major racial & ethnic groups compared to White non-Hispanic men.
- Racial and gender wage gaps remain profound. The median weekly earnings for Hispanic women were just 58.7 percent of White non-Hispanic men's, Black women's were 63.6 percent, White non-Hispanic women's 79.6 percent and Asian women's 95.2 percent. The gender earnings ratio for all weekly full-time workers was 82.3 percent in 2020.

The gender wage gap in weekly earnings for full-time workers in the United States narrowed between 2019 and 2020, from 18.5 percent in 2019 (a gender earnings ratio of 81.5%) to 17.7 percent in 2020 (a gender earnings ratio of 82.3%; Figure 1). Women's median weekly earnings for full-time work were \$891 in 2020 compared with \$1,082 for men. Adjusting for inflation, women's median earnings increased by 8.5 percent compared with 2019; men's earnings increased by 7.5 percent.¹

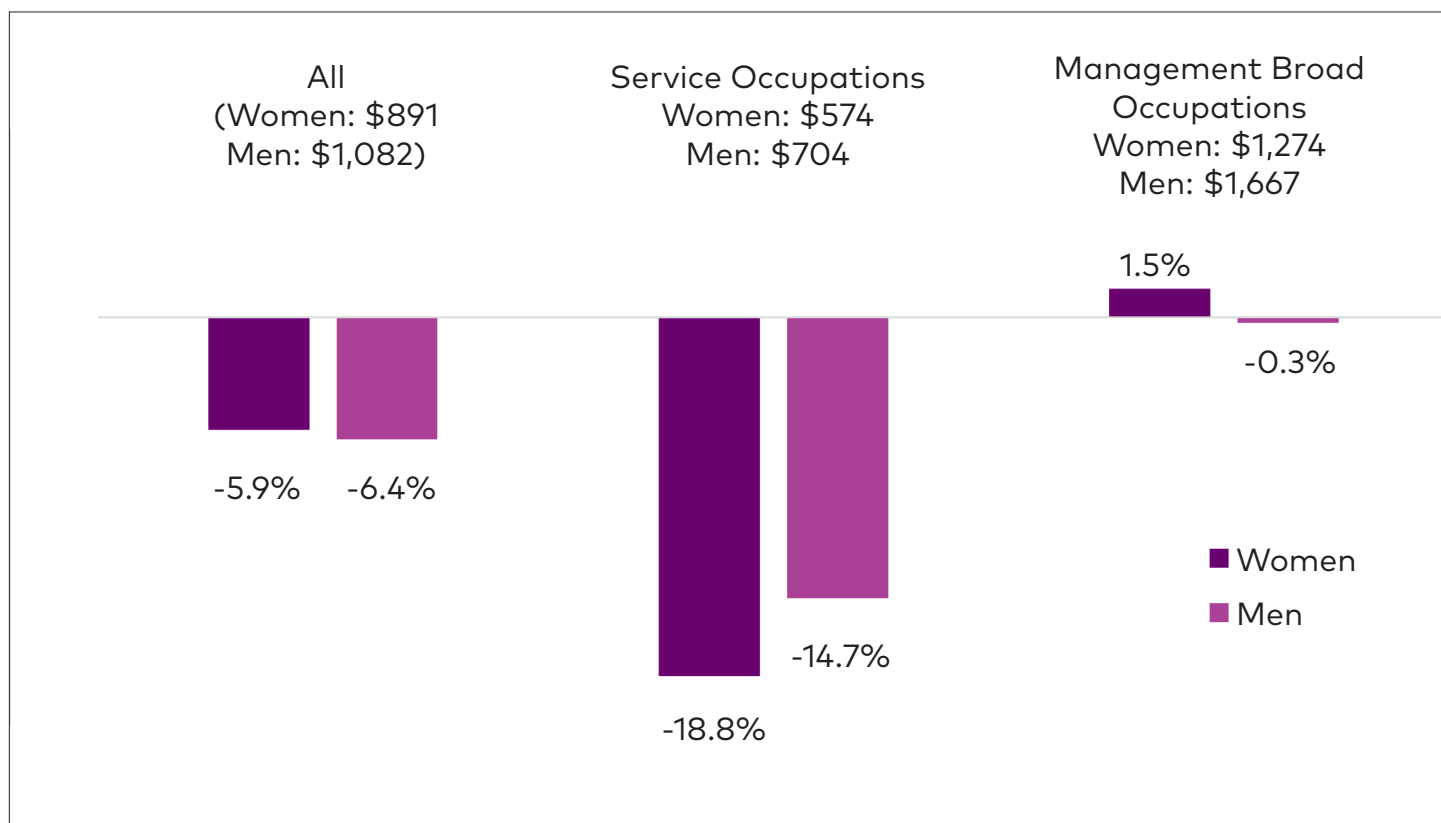


The narrowing wage gap and increase in real earnings are primarily the result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disproportionate job loss in the lowest paid Service occupations. **While the number of all women full-time workers fell by 5.9 percent between 2020 and 2019, the number of women workers in Service Occupations (the lowest earning intermediate occupation, with median weekly earnings of \$574) fell by 18.8 percent**, while the number of women workers in Management, Business, and Financial Operations occupations (the highest earning intermediate occupation, with median weekly earnings of \$1,274) increased by 1.5 percent for women and stayed unchanged for men (Figure 1). Among all women full-time weekly workers, the share of women working in Service occupations fell from 16.5 to 14.2 percent, while the share of women in Management, Business, and Financial Operations occupations increased, from 18.2 percent to 19.7 percent between 2019 and 2020.

Unlike the wage gap between all workers, the gender wage gap in either of these broad occupations stayed unchanged between 2019 and 2020, at 18.5 percent in Service Occupations (a gender earnings ratio of 81.5%) and 23.6 percent in Management, Business, and Financial Operations occupations (a gender earnings ratio of 76.4%).² Real earnings for those women who still have jobs in Service occupations increased by 5.6 percent and for women in Management, Business, and Financial Operations by 3.1 percent.

FIGURE 1. Women's 2020 Job Losses were largest in Low Paid Service Jobs

Change (%) from 2019 to 2020 in the Number of All Full-time Weekly Workers, in Service Occupations, and in Management, Business, and Financial Operations Occupations, by Gender



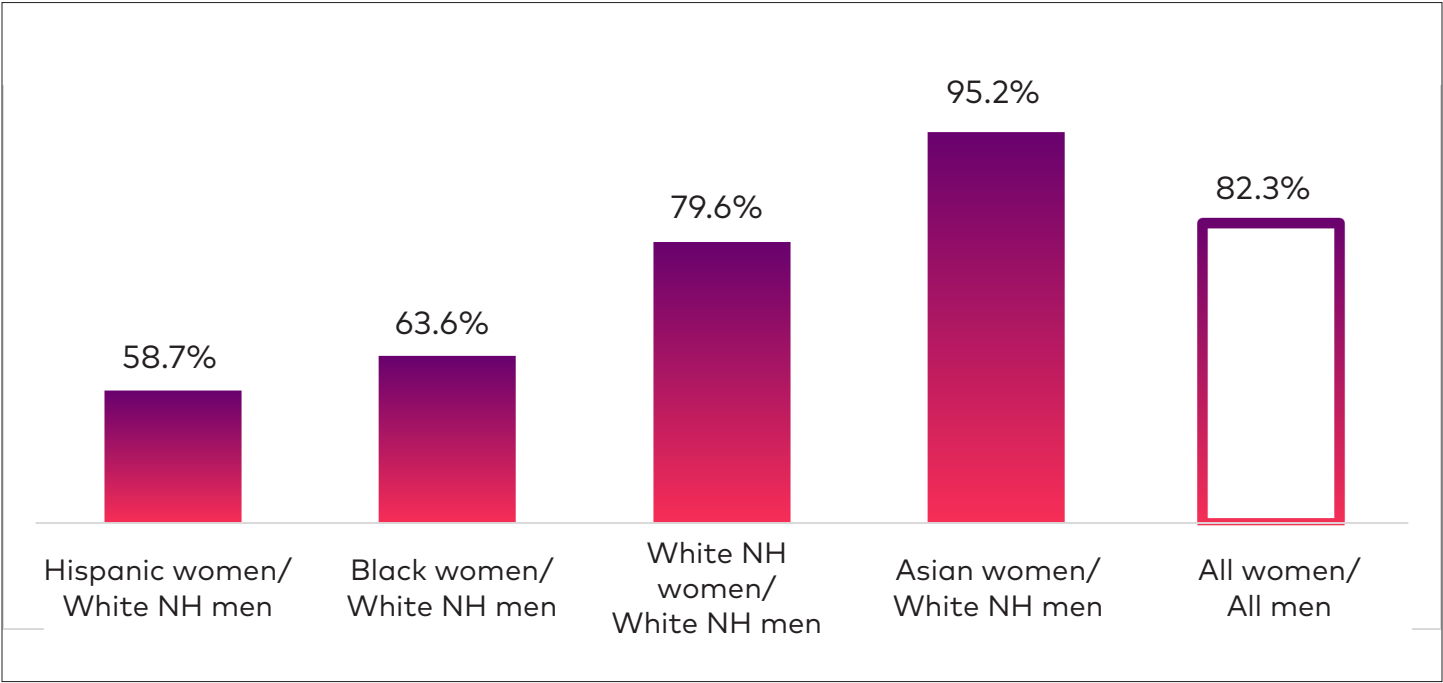
Notes: Full-time is defined as 35 or more hours per week; annual average of weekly earnings data for workers ages 16 and older.

Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Current Population Survey unpublished tables on intermediate occupations.³

Women of all major racial and ethnic groups earned less than men of the same group, and also earn less than White non-Hispanic men. Earnings differences by race and ethnicity remain substantial (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. Women of the largest Racial and Ethnic Groups Earned Substantially less per Week than White non-Hispanic Men in 2020

Female Earnings as a Percent of White Male Earnings Weekly Full-time Workers, by Race and Ethnicity, 2020



Notes: Data for White workers are White alone, non-Hispanic (NH); data for Black and Asian workers may include Hispanic workers. Hispanic workers may be of any race. Annual averages of median weekly earnings.

Source: See Table 2

Compared to 2020, the earnings gap, both within each group and compared with White men, narrowed for all groups and real earnings increased (Table 1). This reflects the same disproportionate job losses of women in the lowest paid Service occupations discussed above; the share of Hispanic women who work in Service Occupations fell from 25.5 to 22.5 percent of all Hispanic women workers, and for Black women from 24 to 21.6 percent. As the lowest paid women lost their full-time jobs and were no longer included in the counting of full-time workers, the inflation-adjusted earnings on average increased by 8.5 percent for Hispanic women, 7.2 percent for Black women, 10.2 percent for Asian women, and 5 percent for White women.⁴

While men’s average real median weekly earnings also increased substantially, 5.4 percent





for Hispanic men, 6.6 percent for Black men, by 7.0 percent for Asian men, and 3.4 percent for White non-Hispanic men, job loss was not quite as severe, and less concentrated in the lowest paid jobs.⁵

Hispanic women's median weekly earnings in 2020 were \$705 for full-time work, only 58.7 percent of White non-Hispanic men's median weekly earnings, but 88.5 percent of the median weekly earnings of Hispanic men (because Hispanic men also have low earnings). The median weekly earnings of Black women were \$764, only 63.6 percent of White men's earnings, but 92 percent of Black men's median weekly earnings (Table 1).

Primarily because of higher rates of educational attainment for both genders⁶, Asian workers have higher median weekly earnings than White, Black or Hispanic workers (the highest of any group shown in Table 1). Asian women's earnings are 95.2 percent of White men's earnings, but only 79 percent of Asian men's earnings. White women earn 79.6 percent of what White men earn, closer to the ratio for all women to all men, because White workers remain the largest group in the labor force.

TABLE 1: Median Weekly Earnings and Gender Earnings Ratio for Full-Time Workers, 16 Years and Older by Race/Ethnicity, 2019 and 2020

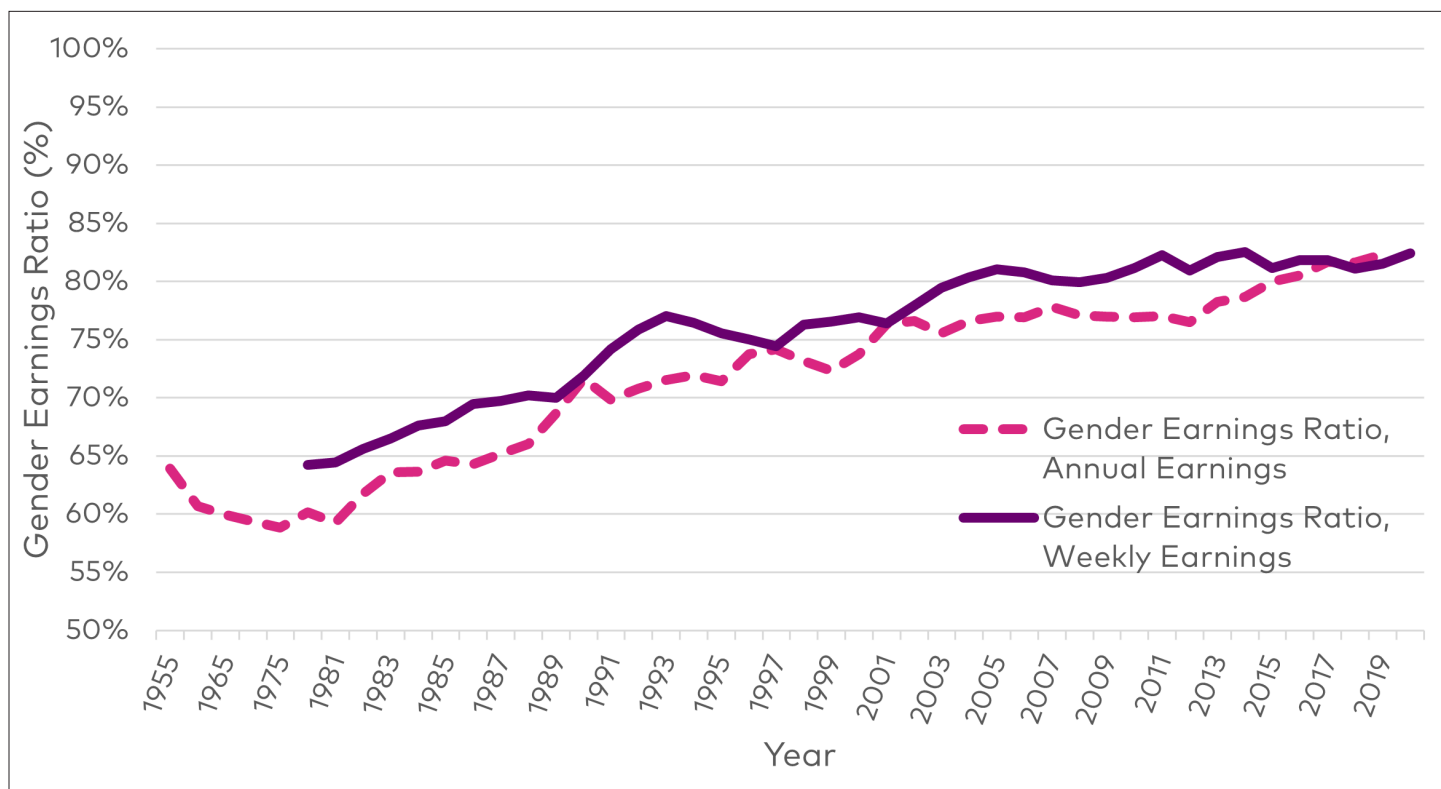
Race/ Ethnicity	2020				2019 (in 2020 dollars)			
	Women	Men	Female Earnings as % of Male Earnings of Same Group	Female Earnings as % of White Male Earnings	Women	Men	Female Earnings as % of Male Earnings of Same Group	Female Earnings as % of White Male Earnings
All Races/ Ethnicities	\$891	\$1,082	82.3%	N/A	\$821	\$1,007	81.5%	N/A
White	\$956	\$1,201	79.6%	79.6%	\$910	\$1,161	78.4%	78.4%
Black	\$764	\$830	92.0%	63.6%	\$704	\$769	91.5%	60.6%
Hispanic	\$705	\$797	88.5%	58.7%	\$642	\$747	85.9%	55.3%
Asian	\$1,143	\$1,447	79.0%	95.2%	\$1,025	\$1,336	76.7%	88.3%

Notes: Data for White workers are White alone, non-Hispanic; data for Black and Asian workers may include Hispanic workers. Hispanic workers may be of any race. Annual averages of median weekly earnings. IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Current Population Survey unpublished tables on intermediate occupations
Source: See Table 2.

Progress in closing the gender wages gap has stalled. In the first 20 years since weekly earnings for have been published, between 1980 and 2000, the gender earnings ratio for weekly full-time workers rose by 12.8 percentage points, and the wage gap shrank from 35.8 percent in 1980 to 23.1 percent in 2000. Between 2000 and 2020, the earnings ratio rose by just 5.4 percentage points, less than half as much, to the current weekly 2020 gender earnings ratio of 82.3 percent, a wage gap of 17.7 percent (Table 2).

FIGURE 3: Progress in Closing the Gender Wage Gap has Stalled

The Gender Earnings Ratio, 1955-2020, Full-Time Workers



Notes and sources: See Table 2

These data include only those workers who are able to work full-time. When all workers with earnings are included, the gap in earnings is much larger because women are more likely than men to work part-time or take time out of paid work to manage childrearing and other caregiving work. Over half of all women in a recent survey said that as a result of COVID-19 they had stopped work or cut back their hours at least temporarily.⁷ Over a 15 year period women workers' earnings were just 49 percent—less than half—of men's earnings, a wage gap of 51 percent in 2001-2015.⁸

Women's lower earnings are due to a number of factors, including lower earnings in occupations done mainly by women; lack of paid family leave and subsidized child care; and discrimination in compensation, recruitment, and hiring.⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the pernicious effects of earnings inequality, leaving particularly Hispanic and Black women and their families with few resources to face an economic crisis.¹⁰ As the economy is recovering, measures are needed to help the incomes of women and their families grow by enforcing and strengthening equal pay statutes, improving the quality of jobs held mainly by women, including raising the minimum wage, access to paid family and medical leave, and affordable and quality child care and care for all who need it.

TABLE 2: The Gender Wage Ratio and Real Earnings, 1955-2020, Full-Time Workers

Year	Median Annual Earnings (2020 dollars)			Median Usual Weekly Earnings (2020 dollars)		
	Women	Men	Female-to-male earnings ratio	Women	Men	Female-to-male earnings ratio
1960	\$24,978	\$41,167	60.7%			
1965	\$27,581	\$46,026	59.9%			
1970	\$31,750	\$53,480	59.4%			
1975	\$32,913	\$55,957	58.8%			
1980	\$33,578	\$55,814	60.2%	\$602	\$938	64.2%
1985	\$35,939	\$55,654	64.6%	\$637	\$936	68.1%
1986	\$36,695	\$57,095	64.3%	\$658	\$947	69.4%
1987	\$36,958	\$56,704	65.2%	\$662	\$947	69.9%
1988	\$37,136	\$56,225	66.0%	\$664	\$946	70.2%
1989	\$37,931	\$55,234	68.7%	\$663	\$946	70.0%
1990	\$38,177	\$53,307	71.6%	\$667	\$927	72.0%
1991	\$38,195	\$54,675	69.9%	\$679	\$915	74.2%
1992	\$38,759	\$54,754	70.8%	\$690	\$909	75.9%
1993	\$38,463	\$53,780	71.5%	\$695	\$902	77.0%
1994	\$38,470	\$53,454	72.0%	\$692	\$904	76.5%
1995	\$38,059	\$53,282	71.4%	\$687	\$910	75.5%
1996	\$39,070	\$52,969	73.8%	\$690	\$918	75.1%
1997	\$40,281	\$54,315	74.2%	\$695	\$934	74.4%
1998	\$41,157	\$56,249	73.2%	\$726	\$951	76.3%
1999	\$41,007	\$56,706	72.3%	\$738	\$964	76.6%
2000	\$41,388	\$56,142	73.7%	\$743	\$966	76.9%
2001	\$42,811	\$56,088	76.3%	\$750	\$982	76.4%
2002	\$43,572	\$56,882	76.6%	\$764	\$980	77.9%
2003	\$43,339	\$57,366	75.5%	\$778	\$980	79.4%
2004	\$42,908	\$56,033	76.6%	\$787	\$980	80.3%
2005	\$42,323	\$54,981	77.0%	\$777	\$959	81.1%
2006	\$41,840	\$54,381	76.9%	\$772	\$956	80.7%
2007	\$43,924	\$56,450	77.8%	\$768	\$959	80.1%
2008	\$43,073	\$55,873	77.1%	\$769	\$962	80.0%
2009	\$43,868	\$56,986	77.0%	\$795	\$990	80.2%
2010	\$43,882	\$57,042	76.9%	\$797	\$981	81.2%
2011	\$42,806	\$55,589	77.0%	\$788	\$960	82.2%
2012	\$42,679	\$55,786	76.5%	\$780	\$964	81.0%
2013	\$43,575	\$55,679	78.3%	\$785	\$958	82.0%
2014	\$43,358	\$55,134	78.6%	\$786	\$953	82.5%
2015	\$44,508	\$55,945	79.6%	\$794	\$978	81.1%
2016	\$44,816	\$55,694	80.5%	\$807	\$986	81.8%
2017	\$44,998	\$55,099	81.7%	\$813	\$994	81.8%
2018	\$46,481	\$56,988	81.6%	\$813	\$1,003	81.0%
2019	\$47,883	\$58,165	82.3%	\$821	\$1,007	81.5%
2020				\$891	\$1,082	82.3%

Notes for Figure 2 and Table 2: *Between 2013 and 2018, the Census Bureau has made a series of changes in data collection and processing to improve the CPS-ASEC income and earnings content; the new estimation methods lead to marginal upwards adjustments in estimates of the annual gender earnings ratio. IWPR data show the most recent data incorporating these changes. Annual earnings data include self-employed workers; weekly data are for wage and salary workers only and are not restricted to full-year workers. Annual earnings are for people 15 years old and older beginning in 1980 and people 14 years old and older for previous years. Before 1989, annual earnings are for civilian workers only. Weekly earnings are for full-time workers aged 16 and older. The annual average of weekly median earnings is usually released in February by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and annual median earnings data in September by the U.S. Census Bureau. Both data series are derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Adjustments for data from earlier years to 2020 dollars are computed on the basis of the Consumer Price Index Series (CPI-U) published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <<https://www.bls.gov/cpi/tables/supplemental-files/historical-cpi-u-201801.pdf>> (accessed February 2021). Earnings data for 1981-1984 are available upon request.

Sources for Figures 2 and 3 and Tables 1 and 2: Annual data: 1955: Francine D. Blau and Marianne A. Ferber, *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1992); 1960-2019: Jessica Semega, Melissa Kollar, Emily A. Shrider, and John F. Creamer. "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2019." (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Weekly data: 2019 - 2020: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2021. Table 37. Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, Annual Averages <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat37.pdf>> (retrieved February 2021); 1979-2018 from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2020. "Table 17. Inflation-adjusted median usual weekly earnings, by age, for full-time wage and salary workers, 1979-2018 annual average." Highlights of Women's Earnings 2019 <<https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-earnings/2019/home.htm>>.



ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ 2019 earnings were converted to 2020 dollars using the Consumer Price Index Series (CPI-U), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2021) "Consumer Price Index Data from 1913 to 2021." <<https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/consumer-price-index-and-annual-percent-changes-from-1913-to-2008/>> (accessed February 2021).

² IWPR calculations based on BLS Table A-2. Usual weekly earnings of employed full-time wage and salary workers¹ by intermediate occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and Non-Hispanic ethnicity, Annual Average 2020 (Source: Current Population Survey); unpublished, and Ariane Hegewisch and Adiam Tesfaselassie. 2020. "The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation 2019." Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research <<https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/employment-and-earnings/the-gender-wage-gap-by-occupation-2019/>> (accessed February 2021).

³ As above.

⁴ See note 1 for inflation adjustment.

⁵ According to data provided by the BLS, the increases in women's and men's median weekly earnings between 2019 and 2020 was statistically significant for each of the different racial and ethnic groups.

⁶ Occupational analysis based on BLS unpublished tables; detail not shown.

⁷ See Jeff Hayes and C. Nicole Mason. 2021. "IWPR Women's Priorities and Economic Impact Survey." February. Policy Brief. Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research <<https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/100-Days-Survey-FINAL.PUBLIC.pdf>>

⁸ See Stephen J. Rose and Heidi I. Hartmann. 2018. Still a Man's Labor Market: The Slowly Narrowing Gender Wage Gap. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research <<https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/employment-and-earnings/still-a-mans-labor-market-the-slowly-narrowing-gender-wage-gap/>> (accessed February 2021).

⁹ See for example Council for Economic Advisors. 2015. "Gender Pay Gap: Recent Trends and Explanations." Issue Brief. The White House <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/equal_pay_issue_brief_final.pdf> (accessed February 2021) and Francine D. Blau and Lawrence Kahn. 2017. "The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations." *Journal of Economic Literature* 55(3): 789-865.

¹⁰ C. Nicole Mason, Andrea Flynn and Shegwei Sun. 2020. Build(ing) the Future: Bold Policies for a Gender-Equitable Recovery. Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research <<https://iwpr.org/building-the-future/>> (accessed February 2021).

Financial support for this brief was provided by Pivotal Ventures, the Ford Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the JP Morgan Chase Foundation.

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