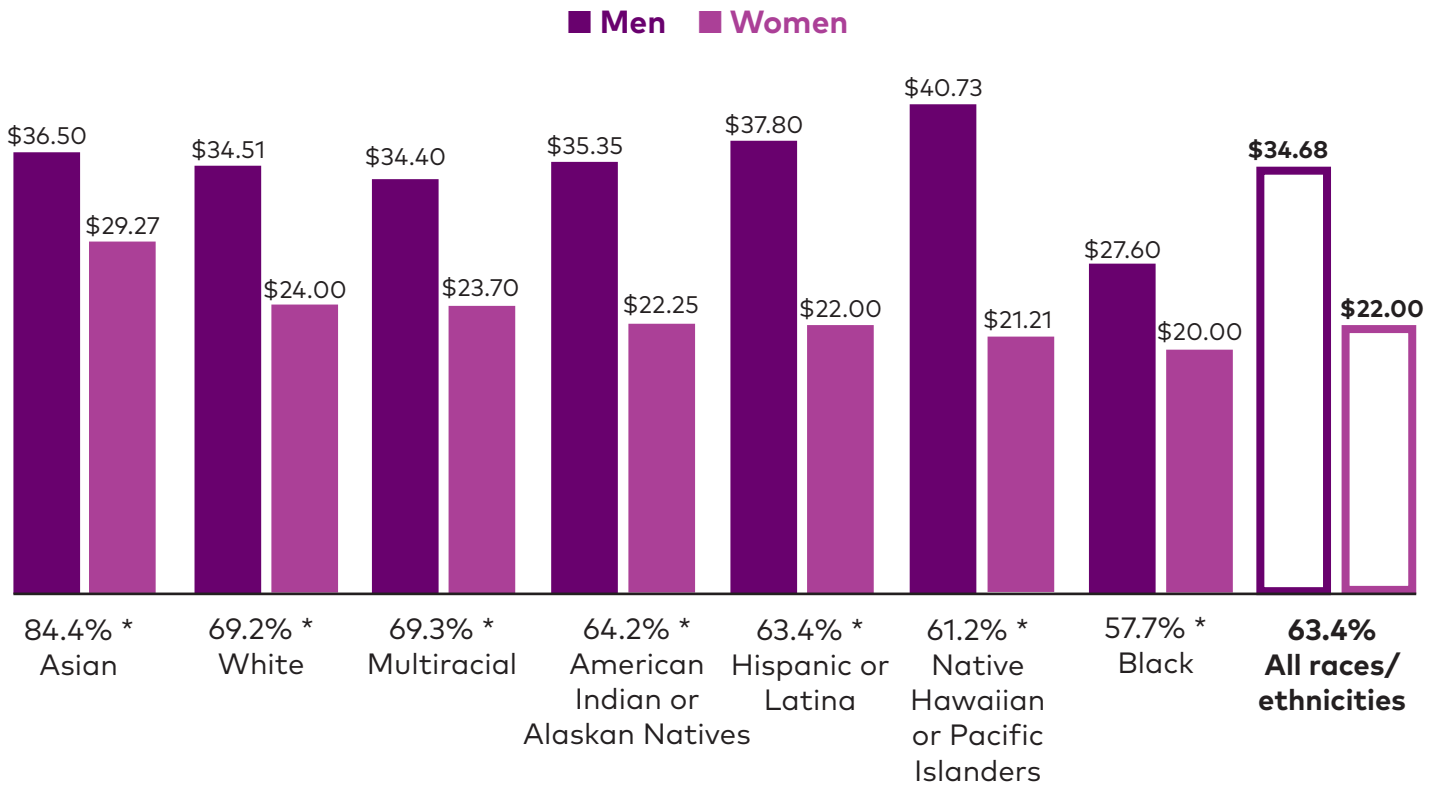


Women Need Better Access to High-Paying Apprenticeships 2024 Gender and Racial Wage Gaps for Apprenticeship Completers

Apprenticeships provide an earn-as-you-learn pathway free of college debt to industry-recognized qualifications in high-demand occupations. Yet, women are less likely than men to be in the highest-paying apprenticeships. In FY 2024, the median hourly wage for women who completed registered apprenticeships was \$22.00 compared to \$34.68 for men, a gender earnings ratio of just 63.4 percent. Black women who completed apprenticeships have the lowest median hourly earnings of all completers (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Median Hourly Wage and the Gender Earnings Ratio for Women and Men Who Completed an Apprenticeship in FY 2023, by Race and Ethnicity*



Source: IWPR analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Office of Apprenticeship Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Database System (RAPIDS) data, available at <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/data-and-statistics>.

Notes: The median is the midpoint of the wage distribution at which 50 percent earn more and 50 percent earn less. FY 2024 includes those who completed an apprenticeship and entered employment between October 2023 and September 2024. Racial categories are exclusive of Hispanic ethnicity; Hispanic or Latina/o workers may be of any race.

*The gender earnings ratio compares women's median earnings to those of White non-Hispanic men.

Women's lower returns to apprenticeships are due to their overrepresentation in lower-paying apprenticeship fields rather than lower earnings than men in the same fields. Nursing assistant was the most common apprenticeship field for women in 2023. The median hourly wage for women who completed a nursing assistant apprenticeship in 2024 was \$18.00, the same as for men. Electrician was the most common apprenticeship field for men in 2023. The median hourly wage for women who completed an electrician apprenticeship in 2024 was \$35.37; for men, it was \$33.60 (men are less likely than women to be in higher-paying union apprenticeships). Women were 77.9 percent of all registered nursing assistant apprentices, and 5.2 percent of all registered electrician apprentices.¹

As a result of women's underrepresentation in high-paying apprenticeship fields, apprenticeships are much less likely to deliver family-sustaining wages to women than men. The US Department of Labor has suggested that a good apprenticeship should lead to a job with a family-sustaining wage, defined as 200 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of three,² which in 2024 is \$51,640, or \$24.83 per hour.³ The earnings of someone working full-time year-round (2,080 hours a year) at the median hourly wage of \$22.00 for women apprenticeship completers would come to \$45,760, well below that family-sustaining wage measure. In contrast, the earnings of someone paid the median hourly wage of \$34.68 for men completers would come to \$72,134, well above it. More efforts are needed to improve women's access to and retention in apprenticeships that lead to high-paying careers.

This Quick Figure was prepared by Ariane Hegewisch. It was made possible with support from Pivotal Ventures and the Aditi Foundation.

¹ IWPR analysis of RAPIDS database for FY 2024 (October 2023 to September 2024), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics RAPIDS database, <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/data-and-statistics>; list of apprenticeships counted as 'electrician' or as 'nursing assistants' available on request.

² Notice of proposed rulemaking to enhance the National Apprenticeship System (Wednesday, January 17, 2024), *Federal Register* 89:11, Federal Register: National Apprenticeship System Enhancements, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/01/17/2023-27851/national-apprenticeship-system-enhancements>.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, "2024 Poverty Guidelines: 48 Contiguous States (all states except Alaska and Hawaii)," <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/7240229f28375f54435c5b83a3764cd1/detailed-guidelines-2024.pdf>.