

Fact Sheet



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The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation 2015 and by Race and Ethnicity

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. Data for both women's and men's median weekly earnings for full-time work are available for 119 occupations.¹ Across occupations the gender earnings ratio of women's median weekly earnings to men's ranges from just 52.5 percent (women at the median making about half as much as men who are 'securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents'²) to 111.2 percent (women making more than men as 'wholesale and retail buyers, except farm products'). There is only one occupation—'bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks'—where women have the same median weekly earnings as men (see Table 1).

Altogether there are only four occupations in which women's median earnings are slightly higher than men's,³ but 108 occupations in which women's median earnings were 95 percent or lower than men's (that is, a wage gap of at least 5 cents per dollar earned by men). During 2015, the median gender earnings ratio for all full-time weekly workers was 81.1 percent, reflecting median weekly earnings for all female full-time workers of \$726, compared with \$895 per week for men (Table 1).⁴ In general it is the highest paid occupations that have the biggest gender gaps and the lowest paid occupations that have the smallest gaps. All of the ten occupations with the largest gender wage gaps have earnings that are higher than median earnings for all workers; six of the ten occupations with the lowest wage gaps or with a gap in favor of women have earnings below the median for all workers.

The Gender Wage Gap Between Occupations

Added to the gender wage gap within occupations is the gender wage gap between occupations. Male-dominated occupations tend to pay more than female-dominated occupations at similar skill levels.⁵ For example, women 'elementary and middle school teachers,' the most common female occupation and a female-dominated field requiring at least a bachelor's degree, earn \$957 (compared with \$1,077 for men, Table 1)⁶; men in 'software developers, applications and systems software,' among the most common occupations for men and a male-dominated field, also requiring at least a bachelor's degree, earn \$1,751 per week on average (compared with \$1,415 for women, Table 2). Tackling occupational segregation is an important part of eliminating the gender wage gap.

The gender wage gap and occupational segregation—men primarily working in occupations done by men, and women primarily working with other women—are persistent features of the U.S. labor market.⁷ Only four of the 20 most common occupations for men and the 20 most common occupations for women overlap (Tables 1 and 2). Of all women working full-time, four of ten (39.6 percent) work in female-dominated occupations and five in ten men (49.7 percent) work in male-dominated occupations.⁸

Only 7.5 percent of women work in male-dominated occupations; only 4.8 percent of men work in female-dominated occupations.⁹

Women Earn Less than Men in All But Two of the Most Common Occupations for Women

Table 1 shows the median weekly earnings and the gender earnings ratio in the 20 most common occupations for full-time working women. The occupations together employ 41.8 percent of women and 15.3 percent of men. The three largest occupations—‘elementary and middle school teachers,’ ‘registered nurses,’ and ‘secretaries and administrative assistants’—together employ 13.4 percent of all women. Ten of these 20 large occupations are female-dominated; in one of these occupations—‘teacher assistants’—there are too few men to estimate their median weekly earnings.

Within the 20 most common occupations for women, median full-time weekly earnings for women range from \$1,213 per week for ‘Managers, all other’ to \$405 per week for ‘cashiers’ (Table 1). Women earn less than men in each of the largest occupations for women except for ‘office clerks, general’ and ‘bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks’ (these calculations include full-time workers only). The gender wage gap among the 20 most common occupations is largest for ‘financial managers,’ with a gender earnings ratio for full-time work of 65.2 percent (corresponding to a gap of 34.8 percent which amounts to \$602 dollars less per week for women than men) and the second largest gap is for ‘retail salespersons,’ with a ratio of 71.2 percent (corresponding to a gap of 28.8 percent or \$200 less per week for women than men).

Women Earn Less than Men in All of the Most Common Occupations for Men

Table 2 shows the median weekly earnings and the gender earnings ratios in the 20 most common occupations for full-time working men. These occupations employ 32.6 percent of male full-time workers and 14.1 percent of female full-time workers. Eleven of the occupations are nontraditional for women, and in five of the 20—‘construction laborers,’ ‘grounds maintenance workers,’ ‘carpenters,’ ‘automotive service technicians and mechanics,’ and ‘electricians,’—there are too few women workers to estimate their median weekly earnings.

Without exception, women’s median earnings are lower than men’s in the 20 most common male occupations for which data are available. Median full-time weekly earnings for men range from \$2,251 for ‘chief executives’ to \$427 for ‘cooks’ (Table 2). ‘First-line supervisors of production and operating workers’ have the largest gender wage gap of the 20 most common occupations for men, with a gender earnings ratio for full-time work of 67.4 percent (corresponding to a gender pay gap of 32.6 percent amounting to \$301 dollars less per week for women).

Six of the 20 most common occupations for men have male weekly earnings above \$1,000, including one, ‘chief executives,’ with median earnings above \$2,000 per week; this compares with four of the most common occupations for women with female weekly earnings above \$1,000.

All of the most common occupations that have too few women or men to calculate the gender earnings ratio are middle-skill occupations, which require more than high school but less than a bachelor’s degree; across all middle-skill occupations workers in female-dominated occupations earn only 66 percent of workers in male-dominated occupations.¹⁰

Table 1. The Gender Wage Gap in the 20 Most Common Occupations for Women (Full-Time Workers Only), 2015

	Women's Median Weekly Earnings	Women's Earnings as a Percent of Men's	Men's median Weekly Earnings	Share of female workers in occupation (percent)	Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
All Full-time Workers	\$726	81.1%	\$895	44.3%	100% (60,746,000)	100% (48,334,000)
20 Most Common Occupations for Women						
Elementary and middle school teachers	\$957	88.9%	\$1,077	80.6%	0.9%	4.7%
Registered nurses	\$1,098	89.9%	\$1,222	88.3%	0.5%	4.4%
Secretaries and administrative assistants	\$683	86.9%	\$786	94.4%	0.2%	4.3%
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides	\$457	86.9%	\$526	88.4%	0.3%	2.6%
Customer service representatives	\$604	87.5%	\$690	65.3%	1.0%	2.4%
Managers, all other	\$1,213	79.5%	\$1,525	38.7%	2.8%	2.2%
First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	\$614	74.4%	\$825	44.3%	2.1%	2.1%
Cashiers	\$405	86.0%	\$471	69.4%	0.7%	1.9%
First-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers	\$781	89.0%	\$878	66.5%	0.7%	1.8%
Accountants and auditors	\$988	73.5%	\$1,345	57.8%	1.0%	1.8%
Receptionists and information clerks	\$569	91.9%	\$619	91.6%	0.1%	1.6%
Office clerks, general	\$622	102.1%	\$609	83.2%	0.3%	1.6%
Retail salespersons	\$494	71.2%	\$694	39.6%	1.9%	1.6%
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	\$407	85.7%	\$475	84.7%	0.2%	1.5%
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	\$692	100.3%	\$690	88.7%	0.1%	1.4%
Secondary school teachers	\$1,006	87.6%	\$1,149	58.2%	0.7%	1.3%
Financial managers	\$1,130	65.2%	\$1,732	51.0%	0.9%	1.2%
Teacher assistants	\$530	N/A	N/A	92.2%	0.1%	1.2%
Waiters and waitresses	\$411	82.0%	\$501	64.9%	0.5%	1.2%
Personal care aides	\$441	82.1%	\$537	81.2%	0.2%	1.1%
<i>Percent of all women and men:</i>					<i>15.3%</i>	<i>41.8%</i>

Note: Earnings data are published only for occupations with an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers. N/A=No data or does not meet BLS publication criteria.

Source: IWPR calculation of data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016. "Household Data, Annual Averages. Table 39" <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm>> (retrieved March 2016).

Table 2. The Wage Gap in the 20 Most Common Occupations for Men (Full-Time Workers Only), 2015

	Women's median weekly earnings	Women's earnings as percent of men's	Men's median weekly earnings	Share of female workers in occupation (percent)	Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
All Full-time Workers	\$726	81.1%	\$895	44.3%	100% (60,746,000)	100% (48,334,000)
20 Most Common Occupations for Men						
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	\$632	84.2%	\$751	3.9%	4.3%	0.2%
Managers, all other	\$1,213	79.5%	\$1,525	38.7%	2.8%	2.2%
First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	\$614	74.4%	\$825	44.3%	2.1%	2.1%
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	\$455	83.2%	\$547	15.3%	2.0%	0.5%
Retail salespersons	\$494	71.2%	\$694	39.6%	1.9%	1.6%
Construction laborers	N/A	N/A	\$642	2.1%	1.9%	0.1%
Janitors and building cleaners	\$429	78.4%	\$547	27.7%	1.8%	0.9%
Software developers, applications and systems software	\$1,415	80.8%	\$1,751	18.0%	1.7%	0.5%
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing	\$917	86.0%	\$1,066	25.9%	1.4%	0.6%
Grounds maintenance workers	N/A	N/A	\$473	4.5%	1.4%	0.1%
Cooks	\$400	93.7%	\$427	37.9%	1.3%	1.0%
Carpenters	N/A	N/A	\$687	1.2%	1.3%	0.0%
Chief executives	\$1,836	81.6%	\$2,251	27.1%	1.3%	0.6%
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	N/A	N/A	\$724	2.3%	1.1%	0.0%
Stock clerks and order fillers	\$506	94.2%	\$537	36.6%	1.1%	0.8%
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	\$623	67.4%	\$924	17.0%	1.1%	0.3%
Production workers, all other	\$501	75.2%	\$666	24.0%	1.1%	0.4%
Electricians	N/A	N/A	\$891	2.9%	1.0%	0.0%
General and operations managers	\$1,002	74.4%	\$1,347	24.5%	1.0%	0.4%
Accountants and auditors	\$988	73.5%	\$1,345	57.8%	1.0%	1.8%
Percent of all women and men					32.6%	14.1%

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

Source: See Table 1

Almost Four Times as Many Women as Men Work in Occupations with Poverty-Level Wages

Low earnings are a significant problem for both male and female full-time workers, but poverty-level wages are much more likely for women than men. Among all occupations, 6.5 million women work in occupations that have median earnings for full-time work for women that are lower than 100 percent of the federal poverty threshold for a family of four, \$462 per week in 2015, compared with 1.7 million men in occupations where median weekly earnings for men are below this poverty threshold.¹¹ The poverty level refers to annual income, and translating them into weekly earnings assumes that a worker can get full-time work for 52 weeks a year; this may not always be possible in occupations characterized by considerable fluctuations in demand for labor and, hence, unstable earning opportunities.

Five of the most common occupations for women (employing 8.3 percent of all full-time working women)—‘nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides,’ ‘cashiers,’ ‘maids and household cleaners,’ ‘waiters and waitresses,’ and ‘personal care aides,’ compared with only one of the most common occupations for men—‘cooks’ (employing 1.3 percent of all full-time working men) have earnings below the poverty threshold for a family of four. A further eight of the most common female, and eight of the most common male, occupations provide median earnings of less than 150 percent of the poverty threshold for a family of four, \$693 per week in 2015.¹² Workers in these occupations are potentially placed among the working poor, with earnings that are often too high to qualify for public support, but too low to attain economic security. For women, these include occupations such as ‘retail salesperson,’ ‘receptionists and information clerks,’ and ‘teacher assistants,’ and for men occupations such as ‘grounds maintenance workers,’ ‘stock clerk and order fillers’ and ‘janitors and building cleaners.’

Women Earn Less than Men of the Same Race and Ethnicity in Broad Occupational Categories

The gender wage gap differs by race and ethnicity. Table 3 provides median weekly earnings for women and men for full-time work by race and ethnicity in seven broad occupational groups; the sample size in the Current Population Survey is not sufficient to provide earnings estimates by race and ethnicity at a more detailed occupational level, or for other racial or ethnic groups. The distribution of women across the occupations varies for each group. More than one third of Asian women, as well as just over three in ten white women, one quarter of black women, and almost one fifth of Hispanic women, work in ‘professional and related’ occupations; black and Hispanic women are about twice as likely to work in ‘service’ occupations as white women; Asian women are considerably less likely than other women to work in ‘office and administrative support’ occupations; and Hispanic women are the most likely group of women to work in ‘production, transportation and material moving’ occupations (Table 3).

For all occupations considered together, Hispanic women have the lowest median earnings at \$566 per week (56.3 percent of the median weekly earnings of white men—\$1,005, Table 3). Black women have median weekly earnings of \$615 or 61.2 percent of the median weekly earnings of white men. Both Asian men and women have the highest median weekly earnings at \$1,129 and \$877, respectively. The earnings ratios for Asian women compared with Asian men, at 77.7 percent, and white women compared with white men, at 78.1 percent, are lower than the gender earnings ratio for the whole population (81.1 percent), and the wage gaps (22.3 percent and 21.9 percent respectively) are larger. The wage gaps between black female and male workers and Hispanic female and male workers are smaller.¹³ The size of the overall wage gap is heavily dependent on the racial and ethnic composition of the working population.

Table 3: Median Weekly Earnings for Male and Female Workers, by Race and Ethnicity for Broad Occupational Groups (Full-Time Workers Only), 2015

Female Workers		White Women		Black Women		Asian Women		Hispanic Women	
Occupation	Median weekly earnings	White women in occupation as % of all female white workers	Median weekly earnings	Black 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	Hispanic women in occupation as % of all female Hispanic workers	
All occupations	\$785	100% (30,394)	\$615	100% (7,142)	\$877	100% (2,954)	\$566	100% (7,168)	
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	\$1,118	19.5%	\$945	13.7%	\$1,199	19.7%	\$916	11.0%	
Professional and related occupations	\$978	33.4%	\$844	25.9%	\$1,213	35.1%	\$853	19.3%	
Service occupations	\$482	11.7%	\$440	23.2%	\$489	15.9%	\$430	26.0%	
Sales and related occupations	\$620	9.1%	\$440	8.0%	\$590	7.4%	\$496	9.6%	
Office and administrative support occupations	\$662	21.0%	\$623	20.6%	\$675	13.9%	\$599	21.0%	
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	\$714	0.7%	\$727	0.7%	6 14	0.4%	\$437	2.3%	
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	\$577	4.5%	\$478	7.9%	\$550	7.5%	\$438	10.8%	
Male Workers		White Men		Black Men		Asian Men		Hispanic Men	
Occupation	Median weekly earnings	White men in occupation as % of all male white workers	Median weekly earnings	Black 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	Hispanic men in occupation as % of all male Hispanic workers	
All occupations	\$1,005	100% (38,702)	\$680	100% (6,445)	\$1,129	100% (3,684)	\$631	100% (11,142)	
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	\$1,510	19.4%	\$1,099	11.5%	\$1,547	17.4%	\$1,092	8.7%	
Professional and related occupations	\$1,363	21.3%	\$1,062	14.9%	\$1,566	38.3%	\$1,144	8.9%	
Service occupations	\$676	9.9%	\$524	19.6%	\$588	11.3%	\$496	18.1%	
Sales and related occupations	\$956	10.1%	\$604	6.6%	\$830	7.9%	\$714	6.7%	
Office and administrative support occupations	\$746	6.0%	\$601	9.2%	\$711	6.5%	\$594	6.8%	
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	\$872	16.1%	\$699	12.3%	\$808	5.2%	\$606	27.4%	
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	\$772	17.2%	\$610	25.8%	\$659	13.3%	\$599	23.5%	

Note: Data for whites workers is for whites alone, non-Hispanic; data for black and Asian workers may include Hispanics. Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: IWPR compilation of data based on U.S. 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 2015*

With the exception of ‘office and administrative support,’ where the median earnings of black women and Hispanic women are slightly higher than black men’s and Hispanic men’s earnings and ‘natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations’ where black women’s earnings are slightly higher than black men’s, men have higher median earnings than women of the same race or ethnicity in each of the major occupational groupings (Table 3). The gender earnings gap is magnified by a race and ethnic earnings gap. For example, Hispanic women in ‘management, business, and financial operations,’ earn 83.9 percent of Hispanic men’s and only 60.7 percent of white men’s earnings in these occupations.

The median weekly earnings of Hispanic women are lower than the federal poverty threshold for a family of four in three occupational groups: ‘service occupations,’ ‘natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations,’ and ‘production, transportation, and material moving occupations’. These three occupational groups employ about two in five Hispanic full-time women workers (39.1 percent; Table 3). The median earnings of black women are lower than the federal poverty threshold for a family of four in two occupational groups: ‘service occupations’ and ‘sales and related occupations’.

Conclusion

More than fifty years after the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made discrimination illegal, a gender earnings gap remains. Our analysis shows that women’s median earnings are lower than men’s in 18 of the 20 most common occupations for women, all of the most common occupations for men, and, indeed, in almost all occupations for which a gender wage gap can be calculated. Female-dominated occupations tend to have lower median earnings than male-dominated occupations, which has a particularly pernicious impact on the women who work in the lowest paid female occupations, including ‘cashiers,’ ‘maids and household cleaners,’ ‘waiters and waitresses,’ and ‘personal care aides,’ where even full-time work may leave them below the federal poverty threshold. Such poverty-level wages are particularly common for Hispanic women. To improve women’s earnings and reduce the gender earnings gap, women need enhanced efforts to ensure non-discriminatory hiring and pay practices, better training and career counseling, and improved work-family supports. Such a public policy as raising the minimum wage, which increases wages in the lowest-paid jobs, is especially important for women, particularly women of color.

Notes

¹ This fact sheet shows median weekly earnings for full-time (35 hours or more per week) wage and salaried workers ages 16 and older (excluding the self-employed) based on Current Population Survey (CPS) annual averages. Earnings data are made available only where there are an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers in an occupation; many occupations have fewer than 50,000 women and/or men working within them and earnings data are not published; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2016. “Household Data Annual Averages Table 39. Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by detailed occupation and sex.” < <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.pdf>> (accessed March 23, 2016).

² This occupation is 30.8 percent female, with median weekly of \$767 for women and \$1,461 for men; IWPR calculation based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), as above.

³ The occupation of ‘wholesale and retail buyers, except farm products’ is 48.6 percent female, with median weekly earnings of \$985 for women and \$886 for men; the three other occupations with a weekly gender earnings ratio greater than 100.5 are ‘police and sheriff’s patrol officers’ (13.1% female), \$1,009 for women and \$1,001 for men (an earnings ratio of 100.8%); ‘office clerks, general’ (83.2% female), \$622 for women and \$609 for men (an earnings ratio of 102.1%); and ‘data entry keyers’ (75.4% female) \$638 for women and \$589 for men (an earnings ratio of 108.3%); IWPR calculation based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), as above.

⁴ Another measure of the gender earnings ratio based on median annual earnings for full-time, year-round work, which includes the self-employed and annual bonus and commission payments, was 78.6 percent (a gender wage gap of 21.4 percent) in 2014; 2015 data will not be published until fall 2016.

⁵ See Ariane Hegewisch and Heidi Hartmann. 2014. “Occupational Segregation and the Gender Wage Gap: A Job Half Done.” Scholar’s Paper to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Publication of the Report of President Kennedy’s Commission on the Status of American Women. *Washington, DC*: U.S. Department of Labor <<http://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/reports/WBPaperSeries.pdf>> (accessed March 2016). The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 defines a nontraditional occupation for women as one where women are fewer than 25 percent of workers; female-dominated occupation are those in which at least three of four workers are women; male-dominated occupations are those in which at least three of four workers are men.

⁶ Teachers at the same level are generally paid similarly, and it is possible that the weekly wage differential of \$127 shown here is due to women and men working at different job levels within this broad category for teachers, or possibly to more men than women taking on extra duties such as coaching or leading special programs.

⁷ In 2010, differences of employment across occupations explained 32.9 percent of the gender wage gap and differences in the distribution of women’s and men’s employment across industries 17.6 percent; Francine D. Blau and Lawrence Kahn. 2016. “The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations” NBER Working Paper No. 21913. <<http://www.nber.org/papers/w21913>> (accessed February 10, 2016).

⁸ See note 6 above for definition of female- and male-dominated occupations. When part-time workers are included, the share of male workers working in male-dominated occupations is lower, at 43.6 percent; the share of women workers in female-dominated occupations is also 39.6 percent; IWPR calculation based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2016. “Household Data Annual Averages Table 11. Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.” <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>> (accessed April 2016).

⁹ When part-time workers are included, 5.8 percent of women work in nontraditional occupations for women, and 4.9 percent of men work in nontraditional occupations for men; source as note 9 above.

¹⁰ See Ariane Hegewisch, Marc Bendick, Barbara Gault, and Heidi Hartmann. 2016. *Pathways to Equity: Narrowing the Wage Gap by Improving Women’s Access to Good Middle-Skill Jobs*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research, <www.womenandgoodjobs.org> (accessed April 2016); calculations based on median annual earnings for full-time year-round workers.

¹¹ The 2015 federal poverty threshold for a family of four was \$24,036 (\$462 per week for 52 weeks); see U.S. Census Bureau. 2016. “Poverty Thresholds.” <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/index.html>> (retrieved March 25, 2016).

¹² At 150 percent of the poverty level, the annual income threshold in 2015 was \$36,054 (\$693 per week for 52 weeks); U.S. Census Bureau as above.

¹³ For more information see “The Gender Wage Gap 2015: Earnings Differences by Race and Ethnicity” IWPR Fact Sheet C437 Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research < <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/the-gender-wage-gap-2015-earnings-differences-by-race-and-ethnicity>>.

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