



Fact Sheet

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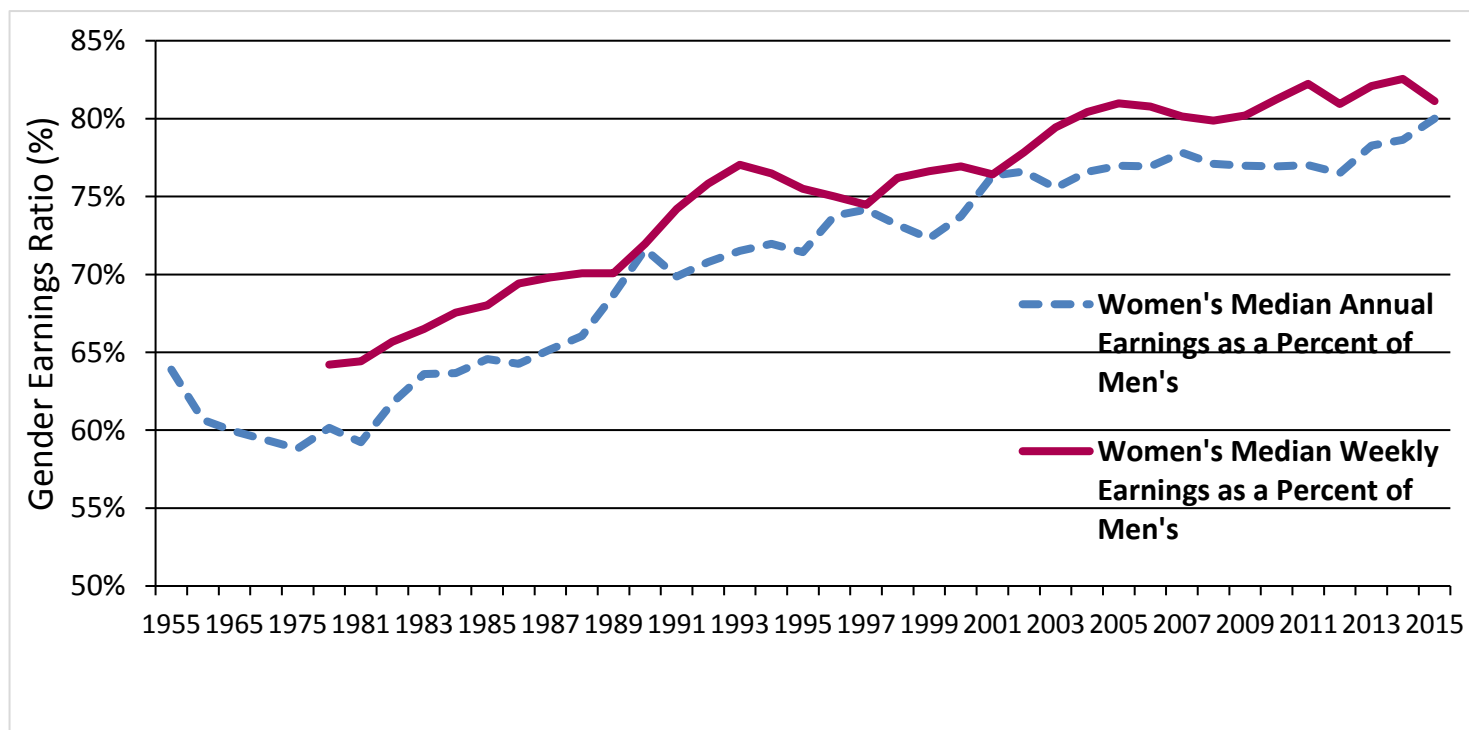
September 2016

The Gender Wage Gap: 2015 Annual Earnings Differences by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

The ratio of women's and men's median annual earnings was 79.6 percent for full-time/year-round workers in 2015. This means the gender wage gap for full-time/year-round workers is 20.4 percent. The ratio of women's and men's median annual earnings did not improve significantly during the last year, and has not seen a statistically significant annual increase since 2007.¹ If the pace of change in the annual earnings ratio continues at the same rate as it has since 1960, it will take another 45 years, until 2059, for men and women to reach parity.² Women's median annual earnings in 2015 were \$40,742 compared with \$51,212 for men; both women's and men's full-time year-round earnings increased significantly between 2014 and 2015 (by 2.7 and 1.5 percent respectively).³

An alternative measure of the wage gap, based on the ratio of women's to men's median weekly earnings for full-time workers, was 81.1 percent in 2015. The annual gender earnings ratio for full-time year-round workers, which includes self-employed workers, tends to be slightly higher than the ratio for weekly earnings (which excludes the self-employed, and earnings from annual bonuses and includes full-time workers who work only part of the year). Unlike the annual earnings data series, the gender earnings ratio based on weekly earnings showed a marginal decline between 2014 and 2015 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Gender Earnings Ratio, 1955-2015, Full-Time Workers



Notes: See Table 2

Both earnings ratios (for weekly and for year-round full-time workers) reflect gender differences in both hourly wages and the number of hours worked (among full-time workers); 61.3 percent of women workers worked full-time, year round in 2015, compared with 73.9 percent of male workers.⁴ If part-time and part-year workers were included, the ratios of women's to men's earnings would be lower, as women are more likely than men to work reduced schedules, often in order

to manage childrearing and other caregiving work. Women are also more likely than men to work in occupations where fewer jobs are offered on a full-time basis or where hours vary from week to week.⁵

Real median full-time year-round earnings increased for women in all major race and ethnic groups (Table 1).⁶ Black women working full-time, year-round experienced the largest increase in earnings between 2014 and 2015 among all women, at 9.0 percent. Asian women’s earnings increased by 4.3 percent, White women’s by 2.8 percent, and Hispanic women’s by 2.6 percent. Women of all major racial and ethnic groups earn less than men of the same group. Black and Hispanic workers of both sexes earn considerably less than White and Asian American workers; as a result, the gender earnings ratio based on earnings of men of the same background is narrower than the gap for women of all races considered together.

Compared to 2014, the gender earnings ratio was marginally lower in 2015 for White and Hispanic women workers relative to the earnings of White men; the earnings gap narrowed substantially only for Black workers and slightly for Asian American workers. When the gender earnings ratio is measured using White men’s earnings as the comparison, it shows marked disadvantage for Hispanic and Black women. Hispanic women earned just 54.4 percent and Black women earned just 63.3 percent of White men’s median annual earnings in 2015; the comparable ratios for 2014 were 54.6 and 59.8 respectively (Table 1). Median earnings for a year of full-time work for Hispanic women are below the qualifying income threshold for eligibility for food stamps; in 2015 this was \$31,247 per year, 130 percent of the federal poverty threshold for a family of four.⁷

Asian American workers as a group have the highest median annual earnings, primarily because of historically higher rates of educational attainment for both genders; Asian American women earn only 78.3 percent of Asian American men’s earnings. The gender earnings ratios for White and Asian women compared to men of the same racial and ethnic background are lower than the gender earnings ratio for all women compared to all men (Table 1).

Table 1. Median Annual Earnings and Gender Earnings Ratio for Full-Time Year-Round Workers age 15 Years and Older by Race/Ethnicity, 2014 and 2015

Racial/Ethnic Background*	2015				2014 (in 2015 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	40,742	51,212	79.6%	-	39,667	50,441	78.6%	-
White	43,063	57,204	75.3%	75.3%	41,870	55,534	75.4%	75.4%
Black	36,212	41,094	88.1%	63.3%	33,225	40,671	81.7%	59.8%
Asian American	48,313	61,672	78.3%	84.5%	46,327	56,590	81.9%	83.4%
Hispanic or Latino	31,109	35,673	87.2%	54.4%	30,328	34,575	87.7%	54.6%

Notes: *White alone, not Hispanic; Black alone or in combination (may include Hispanic); Asian American alone or in combination (may include Hispanic); and Hispanic/Latina/o (may be of any race).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. 2016. "Historical Income Tables: Table P-38. Table P-38. Full-Time, Year-Round Workers by Median Earnings and Sex: 1987 to 2015. <<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-people.html>>

Closing the wage gap is not a zero-sum game – gains for one gender do not require losses for the other. For the gender wage gap to close, women’s real wages must rise faster than men’s, and as the economy becomes more productive, one would expect real wages to rise for both men and women. Yet, as can be seen from Table 2, since 1975 real annual earnings for men have remained virtually unchanged, while women’s real earnings have increased across the same time period (but less so in the past decade). Over the same period, women’s earnings have become increasingly important to family incomes.

Table 2. The Gender Wage Ratio and Real Earnings, 1955-2015, Full-Time Workers

Year	Median Annual Earnings (2015 dollars) Full-time, Year-Round Workers			Median Usual Weekly Earnings (2015 dollars) Full-time, Wage and Salary Workers		
	Women	Men	Female-to- male earnings ratio	Women	Men	Female-to- male earnings ratio
1955			63.9%			
1960	\$22,819	\$37,608	60.7%			
1965	\$25,197	\$42,047	59.9%			
1970	\$29,006	\$48,857	59.4%			
1975	\$30,068	\$51,120	58.8%			
1980	\$30,675	\$50,989	60.2%	\$549	\$856	64.2%
1981	\$30,020	\$50,679	59.2%	\$547	\$850	64.4%
1982	\$30,701	\$49,722	61.7%	\$565	\$860	65.7%
1983	\$31,503	\$49,538	63.6%	\$570	\$857	66.5%
1984	\$32,125	\$50,465	63.7%	\$576	\$853	67.5%
1985	\$32,832	\$50,843	64.6%	\$582	\$856	68.0%
1986	\$33,503	\$52,129	64.3%	\$600	\$865	69.4%
1987	\$33,764	\$51,803	65.2%	\$604	\$866	69.8%
1988	\$33,907	\$51,336	66.0%	\$605	\$864	70.1%
1989	\$34,652	\$50,459	68.7%	\$605	\$864	70.1%
1990	\$34,876	\$48,699	71.6%	\$608	\$846	72.0%
1991	\$34,893	\$49,948	69.9%	\$621	\$836	74.2%
1992	\$35,391	\$49,998	70.8%	\$629	\$829	75.8%
1993	\$35,138	\$49,131	71.5%	\$635	\$824	77.0%
1994	\$35,144	\$48,833	72.0%	\$632	\$826	76.5%
1995	\$34,769	\$48,677	71.4%	\$627	\$830	75.5%
1996	\$35,678	\$48,369	73.8%	\$629	\$838	75.0%
1997	\$36,783	\$49,599	74.2%	\$635	\$853	74.5%
1998	\$37,584	\$51,365	73.2%	\$661	\$868	76.2%
1999	\$37,447	\$51,783	72.3%	\$674	\$879	76.6%
2000	\$37,796	\$51,269	73.7%	\$679	\$882	76.9%
2001	\$39,111	\$51,239	76.3%	\$686	\$897	76.4%
2002	\$39,791	\$51,945	76.6%	\$697	\$895	77.8%
2003	\$39,593	\$52,408	75.5%	\$711	\$895	79.4%
2004	\$39,199	\$51,190	76.6%	\$719	\$894	80.4%
2005	\$38,665	\$50,229	77.0%	\$710	\$877	81.0%
2006	\$38,223	\$49,680	76.9%	\$705	\$873	80.8%
2007	\$40,126	\$51,570	77.8%	\$702	\$876	80.1%
2008	\$39,350	\$51,043	77.1%	\$702	\$879	79.9%
2009	\$40,076	\$52,061	77.0%	\$726	\$905	80.2%
2010	\$40,101	\$52,128	76.9%	\$728	\$895	81.3%
2011	\$39,118	\$50,799	77.0%	\$720	\$876	82.2%
2012	\$39,012	\$50,994	76.5%	\$713	\$881	80.9%
2013	\$39,843	\$50,910	78.3%	\$718	\$875	82.1%
2014	\$39,667	\$50,441	78.6%	\$720	\$872	82.5%
2015	\$40,742	\$51,212	79.6%	\$726	\$895	81.1%

Notes for Figure 1 and Table 2: Annual earnings data include self-employed workers; weekly data are for wage and salary workers only. Annual earnings are for people 15 years old and older beginning in 1980 and people 14 years old and older as of the following year for previous years. Before 1989 annual earnings are for civilian workers only. Weekly earnings are for full-time civilian workers aged 16

and older in and are not restricted to full-year workers. Full-time is work for at least 35 hours per week, full-year for at least 50 weeks per year. Annual median earnings data are typically released in September by the U.S. Census Bureau. The annual average of weekly median earnings is usually released in February by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Both data series are derived from the Current Population Survey. Adjustments for data from earlier years to 2015 dollars are computed on the basis of the Consumer Price Index Research Series (CPI-U-RS); U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics <<http://www.bls.gov/cpi/cpiursai1977-2015.pdf>> (accessed September 2016).

Sources for Figure 1 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 – 2015 U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2015 *Annual Social and Economic Supplement Table P-38. Full-Time, Year-Round Workers by Median Earnings and Sex: 1960 to 2015*; <<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-people.html>> (retrieved September 2016). Weekly data: 1980-2015: from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, Annual Averages* <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat37.pdf> (retrieved February 2016).

Notes

¹ Bernadette D. Proctor, Jessica L. Semega, and Melissa A. Kollar. 2016. “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015.” *Current Population Reports* P60-256 U.S. Census Bureau. <<http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.pdf>>; p.10.

² Institute for Women’s Policy Research. 2016. “Women’s Median Earnings as a Percent of Men’s Median Earnings, 1960-2015 (Full-time, Year-round Workers) with Projection for Pay Equity in 2059. IWPR Publication #Q056. <<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/women2019s-median-earnings-as-a-percent-of-men2019s-median-earnings-1960-2015-full-time-year-round-workers-with-projection-for-pay-equity-in-2059>>

³ Bernadette D. Proctor, Jessica L. Semega, and Melissa A. Kollar. 2016, op.cit., p.6.

⁴ Bernadette D. Proctor, Jessica L. Semega, and Melissa A. Kollar, op. cit. p.11.

⁵ Susan J. Lambert, Peter J. Fugiel, and Julia R. Henly. 2014. “Schedule Unpredictability among Early Career Workers in the US Labor Market: A National Snapshot.” University of Chicago: Employment Instability, Family Well-being, and Social Policy Network, retrieved from <http://ssascholars.uchicago.edu/einet/files/lambert.fugiel.henly_executive_summary.b.pdf> (accessed August 8, 2014).

⁶ Percent change in women’s median annual earnings calculated by IWPR based on the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2016 *Annual Social and Economic Supplement Table P-38. Full-Time, Year-Round Workers by Median Earnings and Sex: 1960 to 2015*. <<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-people.html>>

⁷ The federal poverty threshold for a household of four in 2015 was \$24,036 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015, “Poverty Thresholds.” <<https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/>>, Last revised May 16, 2016). At 130 percent of poverty (the threshold relevant for food stamp eligibility), this is \$31,247 annually, or \$601 per week (assuming full-time work for 52 weeks).

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