

# Fact Sheet



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## The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation

During the last two decades women's participation in the workforce has steadily increased, with women accounting for almost half of all workers. Yet while women have almost reached parity with men in terms of their share of the workforce, they are not near parity in their earnings. In 2008 median weekly earnings for women working full-time are \$638, 79.9 percent of median weekly earnings for men working full-time, at \$798.<sup>1</sup>

### Men earn more than women in almost all occupations

Median weekly earnings for men are higher than those for women in almost every occupation. Of the over 500 individual occupational categories for which there are sufficient data to calculate a wage ratio, in only five occupations do women earn as much as or more than men. Among 'counselors' female and male median earnings are identical at \$787 per week (women are two-thirds of 'counselors'). There are four occupations where women marginally outearn men. Two of these are, traditionally male occupations, where, women account for less than four percent of all workers.<sup>2</sup> Another is 'special education teachers,' where women are the large majority of workers, and the fourth is a subcategory of 'physical and social science technicians,' where women are just under half of all workers.<sup>3</sup> In all other occupations, women's median weekly earnings are lower than those of men in the same occupation.

### The wage gap in the ten most common occupations for women and for men

Women earn less than men even within the jobs that women are most likely to hold, such as 'secretaries,' 'teachers,' and 'nurses.' The wage ratio in the ten most common occupations for women ranges from 71.2 percent of men's earnings for retail sales managers to 93.6 percent of men's earnings for 'customer service representatives.'

The ten most common occupations for women together employ almost three out of ten full-time women workers (28.9 percent), and range from well-paid occupations, such as 'registered nurses' and 'accountants and auditors' to poorly paid jobs such as 'cashiers' and 'receptionists' (Table 1). In all of these occupations except for one, women are at least two-thirds of workers; the exception is 'first line supervisors and managers in retail,' where women are fewer than half of all workers (while they are close to nine out of ten 'cashiers'). The most common single occupation for women is 'secretary and administrative assistants,' employing over five percent of all full-time women workers, but very few men (Table 1). Average weekly earnings for women are 83.4 percent of those for male 'secretaries and administrative assistants.' Only one of the most common occupations for women, 'retail sales managers,' also appears in the top ten most common occupations for men, showing a high degree of occupational sex segregation in the labor force.

The ten most common occupations for men employ more than one-fifth of all men (22.8 percent), and women are the minority of workers in each of them (Table 1). Indeed, in two of these occupations there are too few women to estimate women's median weekly earnings. Where data are available for both men and women, the gender wage gap is generally greater than in the most common occupations for women. The most common occupation for men is 'drivers/sales workers and truck drivers,' employing over four percent of all men, but very few women; in this occupation, women earn only 76.5 percent of what men earn.

### Women earn less than men in the ten highest paying occupations for women

The gender wage gap is evident in both the highest and the lowest paying occupations for women. While some women are working in highly paid occupations, they continue to be the minority of workers in most of the highly paid occupations, and whether they are the minority or majority of workers in a given occupation, they earn less than men in those same jobs. 'Pharmacists'

are at the top end of the earnings scale for women, with median weekly earnings of \$1,647, and a ratio of female-to-male earnings of 86.1 percent as shown in Table 2. Within the ten highest paying occupations for women, women's pay ranges from 64.4 percent of what men earn (for 'physicians and surgeons') to 86.9 percent of what men earn for 'computer and information systems managers.'

Five of the ten highest paying occupations for women also rank in the top ten list for men (Table 3). In the majority of these high earning occupations women are the minority of workers and overall only make up 30 percent of all workers in these occupations. Overall men are twice as likely as women to work in the highest paying occupations: only 13.9 percent of all full-time women workers hold occupations with median weekly earnings of at least \$1,000, compared with 27 percent of men (data not shown).

### **Women earn less than men in the ten lowest paying occupations for women**

Wage data for the ten lowest paying occupations for women showed that the gender wage gap on average is slightly lower than in the highest paying occupations, but that it nevertheless persists in every one of these jobs (Table 2). The ratio of female-to-male earnings in the lowest paying female jobs ranged from 83.3 percent for 'laundry and dry cleaning workers,' to 91.8 percent for 'food preparation workers.'

Women are the majority (58.5 percent) of workers in these occupations. In these predominantly low-skilled, service sector jobs, women's median weekly earnings range from \$299 (for 'counter attendants, cafeteria and coffee shop workers') to \$371 (for maids and house cleaners). Three of the lowest paying occupations for women are also among the lowest paying for men, but men earn more. In addition, earnings in men's 10 worst paying jobs overall exceed those of women's, ranging from \$367 (for 'dish washers') to \$412 per week (for 'ground maintenance workers'; Table 3).

### **The gender wage gap and racial/ethnic background**

The sample size in the Current Population Survey is insufficient to provide reliable estimates of the occupational wage gap by gender and race and ethnicity. Data for all occupations show that in each racial and ethnic group, men have higher median weekly earnings than women. Among women, median earnings for Asian Americans are highest (\$753), followed by white women (\$654), Black or African-American women (\$554), and Hispanic or Latina women (\$501).<sup>4</sup> Previous IWPR analysis of earnings by occupation, based on the American Community Survey, shows that across racial and ethnic groups, men tend to outearn their female counterparts and white and Asian American women tend to outearn African American and Hispanic women.<sup>5</sup>

### **Conclusion**

To address persistent sex differences in pay, public policy efforts should make it easier for employees to report sex discrimination in pay and forbid employers from retaliating against workers who share salary information, should encourage employers to conduct salary audits to ensure fair pay, should improve enforcement of equal pay and equal opportunity laws and should promote job training and education that encourages more women and girls to enter higher paying, traditionally male occupations. Stronger federal contracting rules should also ensure that women are proportionally represented in positions supported with federal dollars.

**Table I:**  
**The wage gap in the ten most common occupations\* for women and men**  
**(full-time workers only), 2008**

	Median weekly earnings for women	Median weekly earnings for men	Women's earnings as % of men's	Share of workers in occupation that are female	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
All female full-time workers (47,209,000)	\$ 638	\$ 798	79.94%	44.3%	100 %
<b>10 most common occupations for women</b>					
Secretaries and administrative assistants	\$ 614	\$ 736	83.4%	96.5%	5.3%
Elementary and middle school teachers	\$ 871	\$ 994	87.6%	81.0%	4.5%
Registered nurses	\$1,011	\$1,168	86.6%	90.1%	4.0%
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides	\$ 424	\$ 485	87.4%	87.7%	2.5%
First-line supervisors/managers of retail sales workers	\$ 556	\$ 781	71.2%	43.2%	2.2%
First-line supervisors/managers of office and administrative support workers	\$ 688	\$ 848	81.1%	68.6%	2.2%
Cashiers	\$ 349	\$ 399	87.5%	74.0%	2.2%
Customer service representatives	\$ 568	\$ 607	93.6%	67.2%	2.2%
Accountants and auditors	\$ 908	\$1,178	77.1%	60.5%	1.9%
Receptionists and information clerks	\$ 502	\$ 537	93.5%	93.3%	1.9%
<i>Percent of all female workers</i>					28.9%
<b>10 most common occupations for men</b>					
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	\$709	\$542	76.5%	4.3%	4.4%
Managers, all other	\$1,359	\$1,010	74.3%	37.5%	2.5%
First-line supervisors/managers of retail sales workers	\$781	\$556	71.2%	43.2%	2.3%
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	\$508	\$417	82.1%	14.2%	2.0%
Construction laborers	\$558	*	S	2.6%	2.0%
Retail salespersons	\$623	\$440	70.6%	42.5%	1.9%
Janitors and building cleaners	\$493	\$397	80.5%	27.4%	1.8%
Carpenters	\$655	*	*	1.1%	1.6%
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing	\$1,064	\$846	79.5%	26.2%	1.4%
Cooks	\$404	\$363	89.9%	36.6%	1.4%
<i>Percent of all male workers</i>					21.3%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2009. *Employment and Earnings* (Vol 56 No. 1) Washington, DC. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.pdf>. (Retrieved April 8<sup>th</sup> 2000).

Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

\* Data are only made available where there are an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers in an occupation.

**Table 2:**  
**Occupations\* with the highest and lowest median weekly earnings for women**  
**(full-time workers only), 2008**

	Median weekly earnings for women	Median weekly earnings for men	Women's earnings as % of men's	Share of workers in occupation that are female	Share of female workers in occupation as percent of all female workers
All female full-time workers (47,209,000)	\$638	\$798	79.9%	44.3%	100 %
<b>10 highest paying occupations for women</b>					
Pharmacists	\$ 1,647	\$ 1,914	86.1%	48.0%	0.2%
Chief executives	\$ 1,603	\$ 1,999	80.2%	24.0%	0.5%
Lawyers	\$ 1,509	\$ 1,875	80.5%	38.3%	0.5%
Computer software engineers	\$ 1,351	\$ 1,555	86.9%	20.5%	0.4%
Computer and information systems managers	\$ 1,260	\$ 1,641	76.8%	27.8%	0.3%
Physicians and surgeons	\$ 1,230	\$ 1,911	64.4%	31.8%	0.4%
Management analysts	\$ 1,139	\$ 1,391	81.9%	46.0%	0.4%
Human resources managers	\$ 1,137	\$ 1,433	79.3%	67.4%	0.4%
Speech-language pathologists	\$ 1,124	-	*	100.0	0.2%
Computer and mathematical occupations	\$ 1,088	\$ 1,320	82.4%	24.7	1.8%
<i>Percent of all female workers</i>					5.1%
<b>10 Lowest paying occupations for women</b>					
Counter attendants, cafeteria, food concession, and coffee shop	\$ 299	*	*	64.3%	0.1%
Food preparation workers	\$ 338	\$ 368	91.8%	60.6%	0.4%
Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food	\$ 341	*	*	70.2%	0.2%
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	\$ 345	\$ 414	83.3%	59.2%	0.2%
Miscellaneous agricultural workers	\$ 346	\$ 402	86.1%	14.7%	0.2%
Cashiers	\$ 349	\$ 399	87.5%	74.0%	2.2%
Cooks	\$ 363	\$ 404	89.9%	36.6%	1.0%
Waiters and waitresses	\$ 367	\$ 436	84.2%	65.7%	1.2%
Packers and packagers, hand	\$ 368	\$ 410	89.8%	59.0%	0.4%
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	\$ 371	\$ 436	85.1%	87.6%	1.6%
<i>Percent of all female workers</i>					7.5%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2009. *Employment and Earnings* (Vol 56 No. 1) Washington, DC. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.pdf>. (Retrieved April 8th 2000).

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\* Data are only made available where there are an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers in an occupation.

**Table 3:**  
**Occupations\* with the highest and lowest median weekly earnings for men**  
**(full-time workers only), 2008**

	Median weekly earnings for men	Median weekly earnings for women	Women's earnings as % of men's	Share of workers in occupation that are male	Share of male workers in occupation as percent of all male workers
All male full-time workers (59,439,000)	\$798	\$638	79.9%	55.7%	100%
<b>10 highest paying occupations for men</b>					
Chief executives	\$ 1,999	\$ 1,603.0	80.19%	76%	1.3%
Pharmacists	\$ 1,914	\$ 1,647.0	86.05%	52%	0.2%
Physicians and surgeons	\$ 1,911	\$ 1,230.0	64.36%	68%	0.7%
Lawyers	\$ 1,875	\$ 1,509.0	80.48%	62%	0.7%
Engineering managers	\$ 1,758	*	*	96%	0.2%
Computer and information systems managers	\$ 1,641	\$ 1,260.0	76.78%	72%	0.9%
Aerospace engineers	\$ 1,622	*	*	92%	0.5%
Marketing and sales managers	\$ 1,601	\$ 1,024.0	63.96%	59%	0.2%
Chemical engineers	\$ 1,562	*	*	88%	0.9%
Computer software engineers	\$ 1,555	\$ 1,351.0	86.88%	79%	0.1%
<i>Percent of all male workers</i>					5.70%
<b>10 Lowest paying occupations for men</b>					
Dishwashers	\$ 367	*	*	71%	0.2%
Food preparation workers	\$ 368	\$ 338.0	91.85%	39%	0.2%
Service station attendants	\$ 378	*	*	88%	0.1%
Dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers	\$ 394	\$ 386.0	97.97%	57%	0.2%
Cashiers	\$ 399	\$ 349.0	87.47%	26%	0.6%
Miscellaneous agricultural workers	\$ 402	\$ 346.0	86.07%	85%	0.8%
Cooks	\$ 404	\$ 363.0	89.85%	63%	1.4%
Packers and packagers, hand	\$ 410	\$ 368.0	89.76%	41%	0.2%
Laundry and dry-cleaning workers	\$ 414	\$ 345.0	83.33%	41%	0.1%
Grounds maintenance workers	\$ 422	*	*	96%	1.3%
<i>Percent of all male workers</i>					5.10%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2009. *Employment and Earnings* (Vol 56 No. 1) Washington, DC. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.pdf>. (Retrieved April 8<sup>th</sup> 2009).

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\* Data are only made available where there are an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers in an occupation.

Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Data in this fact sheet are for 2008 and are based on the Current Population Survey (CPS). The median weekly earnings data are based on full-time waged and salaried workers (excluding the self-employed); full-time is defined as working at least 34 hours per week. Because women are more likely than men to work part-time, their share of full-time workers is lower than their share of the total workforce.
- <sup>2</sup> Women in 'construction and extraction occupations' have median weekly earnings of 108.2 per cent of men but were only 2.6% of the total workforce in that occupation; women's median full-time weekly earnings are also marginally higher than men's (at 100.7 percent) in 'installation, maintenance and repair occupations' where women were fewer than 4 percent of workers.
- <sup>3</sup> Women were 84.8% of all special education teachers and have median weekly earnings of \$949, 103.8% of males. Median weekly earnings for female 'other life physical and social science technicians' (women were 48.4% of this group) were 100.1% of male earnings.
- <sup>4</sup> See James Marschall Borbely (2009): 'U.S. labor market in 2008: economy in recession'. *Monthly Labor Review*, March 2009, p.16.
- <sup>5</sup> IWPR's Women's Data Center, Femstats.net, has occupational earnings data for women and men in each state and by race and ethnicity.

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