



The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation

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. During 2012, median weekly earnings for female full-time workers were \$691, compared with \$854 per week for men, a gender wage ratio of 80.9 percent (Table 1; a gender wage gap of 19.1 percent).¹ 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, particularly in jobs that require higher educational levels.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. Only four of the 20 most common occupations for men and the 20 most common occupations for women overlap. Four out of ten women (39.6 percent) work in traditionally female occupations and between four and five out of ten male workers (43.7 percent) work in traditionally male occupations; only 6.0 percent of women work in traditionally male occupations and only 4.8 percent of men in traditionally female occupations.³

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

Table 1 shows the median weekly earnings and the gender wage gap in the 20 most common occupations for full-time working women. The three largest occupations—'secretaries and administrative assistants,' 'elementary and middle school teachers,' and 'registered nurses'—together employ more than 13 percent of all women. More than 40 percent of full-time female employees worked in only 20 occupations, but only 15 percent of full-time male employees work in these occupations. Ten of these occupations are female sex-typed, meaning at least three out of four workers are women.

Within the 20 most common occupations for women, median full-time weekly earnings for women range from \$1,086 per week for 'registered nurses' to \$368 per week for 'cashiers' (Table 1). Women earn less than men (these calculations include full-time workers only) in each of these most common occupations for women; the gender wage gap is largest for 'retail salesperson,' with a gender median earnings ratio for full-time work of 64.3 percent. Among all occupations with earnings for full-time workers, the gender gap is largest for 'insurance sales agents.'⁴ In two of the most common occupations, 'office clerks, general' and 'social workers,' women earn almost as much as men, with a wage gap of less than two percent (Table 1).

Table 1: The Wage Gap in the 20 Most Common Occupations for Women (Full-Time Workers Only), 2012

	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	\$691	80.9%	\$854	44.2%	100% 57,286,000	100% 45,462,000
20 most common occupations for women						
Secretaries and administrative assistants	\$665	82.8%	\$803	95.3%	0.2%	4.7%
Elementary and middle school teachers	\$921	81.6%	\$1,128	80.9%	0.8%	4.3%
Registered nurses	\$1,086	91.3%	\$1,189	89.4%	0.4%	4.3%
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides	\$445	87.6%	\$508	88.1%	0.3%	2.8%
Customer service representatives	\$585	85.5%	\$684	67.3%	0.9%	2.3%
First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	\$598	75.5%	\$792	42.6%	2.3%	2.1%
Cashiers	\$368	92.0%	\$400	69.8%	0.7%	2.1%
Managers, all other	\$1,078	76.5%	\$1,409	38.1%	2.6%	2.0%
Accountants and auditors	\$996	73.8%	\$1,350	60.2%	1.0%	1.9%
First-line supervisors of office and administrative support workers	\$760	84.9%	\$895	67.3%	0.7%	1.9%
Receptionists and information clerks	\$524	86.8%	\$604	91.2%	0.1%	1.7%
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	\$672	90.8%	\$740	88.1%	0.2%	1.7%
Retail salespersons	\$436	64.3%	\$678	38.4%	2.0%	1.6%
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	\$395	92.9%	\$425	84.5%	0.2%	1.5%
Office clerks, general	\$600	98.8%	\$607	83.6%	0.2%	1.5%
Financial managers	\$988	70.3%	\$1,405	54.8%	0.9%	1.4%
Secondary school teachers	\$978	93.1%	\$1,050	55.4%	0.8%	1.3%
Waiters and waitresses	\$396	86.8%	\$456	63.9%	0.6%	1.3%
Social workers	\$845	98.7%	\$856	80.1%	0.2%	1.2%
Teacher assistants	\$452	91.7%	\$493	90.8%	0.1%	1.1%
<i>Percent of all women and men:</i>					15.2%	42.5%

Note: * Earnings data are published only for occupations with an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers.

Source: IWPR compilation of data from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012.

"Household Data, Annual Averages, Table 39" <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm>> (retrieved April 2013).

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

Table 2 shows the median earnings and the gender wage gap in the 20 most common occupations for full-time working men. These occupations employ close to a third of male and one in seven female full-time workers; nine of the occupations are non-traditional for women, and in four out

of the 20—‘automotive service technicians and mechanics,’ ‘carpenters,’ ‘construction laborers,’ and ‘grounds maintenance workers’—there are too few women workers to estimate median weekly earnings for women.

Table 2: The Wage Gap in the 20 Most Common Occupations for Men (Full-Time Workers Only), 2012

	Men's median weekly earnings	Women's Median weekly earnings	Women's earnings as percent of men's	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	\$854	\$691	80.9%	44.2%	100% 57,286,000	100% 45,462,000
20 most common occupations for men						
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	\$736	\$537	73.0%	4.0%	4.2%	0.2%
Managers, all other	\$1,409	\$1,078	76.5%	38.1%	2.6%	2.0%
First-line supervisors of retail sales workers	\$792	\$598	75.5%	42.6%	2.3%	2.1%
Retail salespersons	\$678	\$436	64.3%	38.4%	2.0%	1.6%
Janitors and building cleaners	\$511	\$408	79.8%	25.1%	2.0%	0.8%
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	\$519	\$476	91.7%	16.5%	1.9%	0.5%
Construction laborers	\$609	-	-	2.6%	1.6%	0.1%
Cooks	\$403	\$361	89.6%	32.9%	1.5%	0.9%
Software developers, applications and systems software	\$1,674	\$1,362	81.4%	19.6%	1.4%	0.4%
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing	\$1,161	\$822	70.8%	26.1%	1.4%	0.6%
Grounds maintenance workers	\$452	-	-	3.6%	1.3%	0.1%
Carpenters	\$673	-	-	0.9%	1.3%	0.0%
Chief executives	\$2,275	\$1,730	76.0%	26.4%	1.3%	0.6%
General and operations managers	\$1,436	\$971	67.6%	28.3%	1.2%	0.6%
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	\$704	-	-	1.0%	1.2%	0.0%
Production workers, all other	\$619	\$504	81.4%	26.3%	1.1%	0.5%
Stock clerks and order fillers	\$516	\$484	93.8%	33.1%	1.1%	0.7%
Security guards and gaming surveillance officers	\$537	\$501	93.3%	18.6%	1.1%	0.3%
First-line supervisors of production and operating workers	\$954	\$674	70.6%	18.0%	1.0%	0.3%
Accountants and auditors	\$1,350	\$996	73.8%	60.2%	1.0%	1.9%
<i>Percent of all women and men:</i>					32.5%	14.2%

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

Source: See Table 1

Median full-time weekly earnings for men range from \$2,275 for ‘chief executives’ to \$403 for ‘cooks’ (Table 2). Six of the most common 20 occupations have weekly earnings above \$1,000,

compared with only two of the most common occupations for women. Without exception, women's median earnings are less than men's in the 20 most common male occupations.

Women Are More Than Twice as Likely as Men to Work in Occupations with Poverty Wages

Four of the most common occupations for women—'cashiers,' 'waiters and waitresses,' 'maids and household cleaners,' and 'retail salespersons'—and one of the most common occupations for men—'cooks'—have median earnings for a full week of work that provide less than 100 percent of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' federal poverty levels for a family of four.⁵ The poverty levels refer to annual earnings and translating them into weekly earnings assumes that a worker would be able to get full-time work for 52 weeks a year; this may not always be possible in these occupations, characterized by considerable fluctuations in demand for labor and, hence, unstable earning opportunities.

A further six 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. Workers in these occupations are potentially placed among the working poor, with earnings that are often too high to qualify for public supports but too low to attain economic security. With one exception ('retail sales persons'), median earnings are below or near poverty for both men and women in such low wage occupations. These include occupations such as 'teacher assistants' and 'nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides.'

Low earnings are a significant problem for both male and female workers. Yet overall more than three times as many women (4.87 million) than men (1.24 million) work in occupations with median earnings for full-time work below the federal poverty threshold for a family of four.⁶

Women Earn Less Than Men in Broad Occupations by Race and Ethnicity

The gender wage gap differs by race and ethnic background. Hispanic/Latina women have the lowest median earnings, at \$521 per week or 54 percent of the median weekly earnings of white men; black women have median weekly earnings of \$599 or 63 percent of median weekly earnings of white men (\$748, Table 3). Asians have the highest median weekly earnings, for both men and women, and the highest levels of educational attainment. The wage gaps for Asian women compared with Asian men, and white women compared with white men are larger than the wage gap for the whole population; the wage gaps between black female and male workers and Latino male and female workers are smaller. More detailed information is available in IWPR's fact sheet, *The Gender Wage Gap: 2012*.⁷

Table 3 provides median weekly earnings for full-time work by race and ethnicity in seven intermediate occupational groups; the sample size in the Current Population Survey is not sufficient to provide reliable earnings estimates by race and ethnicity at a more detailed occupational level, or to provide occupational earnings data for other racial or ethnic groups. The distribution of women across the occupations varies for each group. A third of Asian and white women, a quarter of black women but fewer than one in five Hispanic women work in

'professional and related' occupations; black and Hispanic women are approximately twice as likely to work in service occupations than white women; Asian women are considerably less likely than other women to work in 'office and administrative support' occupations, and Hispanic women are most likely to work in 'production, transportation and material moving' occupations (Table 3).

With one exception (black women's median earnings are the same as black men's in 'office and administrative support') in each of the major occupational groupings men earn more than women of the same race or ethnicity (Table 3). The gender earnings gap is magnified by a race and ethnic earnings gap. For example, Hispanic women in management, business, and finance, earn only 86 percent of Hispanic men in these occupations, while Hispanic men earn only 69 percent of white men's earnings, and Hispanic women earn only 59 percent of white male managers. The median earnings of Hispanic women are lower than the federal poverty levels in four occupational groups: 'service occupations,' 'production, transportation, and material moving occupations,' 'sales and related occupations,' and 'natural resources, construction, and maintenance' occupations. These four occupational groups collectively employ five out of ten (48.6 percent) Hispanic full-time women workers (Table 3).

Conclusion

Fifty years after the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and almost fifty years after Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made compensation discrimination illegal, a gender earnings gap remains. Our analysis of the 20 most common occupations shows that women's median earnings are lower than men's within most occupations, and that female-dominated occupations tend to have lower median earnings than male-dominated occupations. This has a particularly pernicious impact on the women who work in the lowest paid female occupations in 'nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides' and 'cleaning and housekeeping,' where even full-time work may leave them with earnings at or only marginally above the federal poverty threshold. Such poverty wages are particularly common for Latina women. The comparisons of earnings in broad occupational groups by race and ethnicity show that Latina women are particularly likely to be in the lowest paid jobs, even in the lower skilled occupations. Women and their families need enhanced efforts to ensure non-discriminatory hiring and pay practices, better training and career counseling, and work family supports.

Table 3: Median Weekly Earnings for Male and Female Workers, by Broad Occupational Classification and Race and Ethnic Background (Full-Time Workers Only), 2012

Female Workers Occupation	White Women (non-Hispanic only)		Black or African American Women*		Asian Women		Latina or Hispanic Women	
	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	Latina women in occupation as % of all female Latina workers
All occupations	\$748	28.6%	\$599	6.3%	\$770	2.5%	\$521	6.2%
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	\$1020	19.2%	\$921	14.1%	\$1149	18.1%	\$855	11.6%
Professional and related occupations	\$949	32.0%	\$797	24.4%	\$1140	33.1%	\$797	18.0%
Service occupations	\$459	12.2%	\$437	23.9%	\$463	17.7%	\$397	25.9%
Sales and related occupations	\$589	8.8%	\$419	8.0%	\$491	8.5%	\$425	9.8%
Office and administrative support occupations	\$643	22.6%	\$618	21.1%	\$657	15.2%	\$580	21.8%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	\$724	0.6%	\$580	0.9%	\$470	0.7%	\$370	1.8%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	\$539	4.7%	\$478	7.6%	\$480	6.6%	\$405	11.1%
Male Workers Occupation	White Men (non-Hispanic only)		Black or African American Men*		Asian Men		Latino or Hispanic Men	
	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	Latino men in occupation as % of all male Latino workers
All occupations	\$958	36.8%	\$665	5.6%	\$1055	3.1%	\$592	9.6%
Management, business, and financial operations occupations	\$1441	18.7%	\$1137	10.4%	\$1463	17.4%	\$996	8.0%
Professional and related occupations	\$1307	20.7%	\$974	14.5%	\$1465	36.1%	\$974	8.6%
Service occupations	\$634	10.2%	\$498	20.0%	\$515	12.6%	\$453	20.5%
Sales and related occupations	\$933	10.6%	\$591	8.1%	\$751	8.4%	\$626	6.4%
Office and administrative support occupations	\$748	6.1%	\$619	10.1%	\$739	6.3%	\$615	6.5%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	\$835	16.2%	\$671	11.7%	\$787	6.4%	\$567	25.1%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	734	17.6%	598	25.1%	646	12.7%	557	24.9%

Note: * Data for black or African Americans may include black Hispanics or Latinos. 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 2012*

Notes

¹The weekly earnings data in this factsheet are based on the Current Population Survey (CPS) and refer to full-time (working 35 hours or more per week) wage and salary workers age 16 and older (excluding the self-employed); annual earnings data for 2012 (which include workers 15 years and older as well as the self-employed, with earnings for at least 50 weeks of the year) are not available until Fall 2013; the gender wage gap based on annual earnings was 23 percent in 2011, and the female/male earnings ratio was 77 percent.

² See Ariane Hegewisch, Hannah Liepmann, Jeffrey Hayes, and Heidi Hartmann, "Separate and Not Equal? Gender Segregation in the Labor Market and the Gender Wage Gap." IWPR Briefing Paper. Institute for Women's Policy Research: Washington, DC, 2010.; available at <<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/separate-and-not-equal-gender-segregation-in-the-labor-market-and-the-gender-wage-gap>>

³The definition of traditional/non-traditional occupations as having at least 75 percent of the workers of one gender is provided in the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 S.250-6. Calculation includes only occupations with an estimated minimum of 50,000 workers. Restricting the calculation to full-time workers only increases segregation: 40.3 percent of women and 46.9 percent of men work full-time in traditional occupations for their gender; and 5.9 percent of women and 4.7 percent of men work full-time in occupations non-traditional for their gender (IWPR compilation of data based on US Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Table 11. Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, Annual Average 2012.* <<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>>). Effective with January 2012 data, occupations reflect the introduction of the 2010 Census Standard Occupational classification system into the CPS. Data for 2012 are not strictly comparable with earlier years.

⁴ Women 'insurance sales agents' had median weekly earnings for full-time work of \$641, compared to median weekly earnings of \$1026 for men, a female/male earnings ratio of 62.5 percent and gender wage gap of 37.5 percent. There are only two occupations where women's median weekly earnings are slightly higher than men's: 'health practitioner support technologists and technicians' (\$621 per week for women and \$599 per week for men, an earnings ratio of 103.7 percent) and 'counselors' (\$855 per week for women and \$833 per week for men, and earnings ratio of 102.6 percent). Apart from 'social workers' and 'office clerks, general,' the occupations of 'pharmacists' and 'wholesale and retail buyers, except farm products,' have a wage gap of less than 1 percent (IWPR calculation based on same source as Table 1).

⁵The federal poverty level for a family of four in 2012 was \$23,050, or \$443 per week for 52 weeks. One-hundred fifty percent of the poverty level was \$34,575, or weekly earnings \$665; see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 'The 2012 HHS Poverty Guidelines', at <<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtm>> (retrieved April 4, 2013)

⁶ IWPR calculation based on same source as Table 1.

⁷ The fact sheet is available at < <http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/the-gender-wage-gap-2012>>.

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