

## NEWS



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FOR INFORMATION CALL:

Erica Williams, (202) 785-5100

## Women Edged Out of Expanding Communications Industries Women of Color Lowest Paid

**Washington, DC** – Women are not getting an equal share of new jobs in the Communications and Media Sector, according to a new report released last week by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). Job growth in the sector is bypassing the highest-paid industry—Wired Telecommunications—in favor of others with lower wages.

*Making the Right Call: Jobs and Diversity in the Communications and Media Sector* analyzes data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to evaluate the status of non-supervisory women and workers of color in seven key industries in this sector, which is often seen as vital to democracy.

Only one in four Communications and Media jobs created between 1990 and 2005 were filled by women. Employment in the sector grew from 2,688,000 to 3,066,000, or 378,000, but women gained only 88,000 jobs, or 23.3 percent of new employment. Women's share of jobs declined in several industries in this sector between 1990 and 2002 in both the old industries that have been shedding workers and, more surprisingly, in the new industries that are growing rapidly. In Cable Services, women fell from 44.8 percent to 40.9 percent of those employed over the period 1995 to 2002, even though the total number of workers in Cable Distribution almost doubled and employment in Cable Programming rose by two-thirds. Women's share of employment fell in Wired and Wireless Telephone Services taken together, from 57.5 percent to 53.1 percent over the period 1990 to 2002. Wireless employment more than quadrupled, while Wired lost nearly a quarter of its jobs; women's small share of the new jobs in Wireless did not offset their loss of jobs in the old industry. Women's representation in the labor market overall remained constant at 48 percent (for non-supervisory workers). The only Communications and Media industry in which the share of women is increasing is Newspaper Publishers, the lowest-paid industry, and an "old" industry that has lost almost one-fifth of its jobs in the last 15 years. Women's share of jobs in that industry increased from 41.5 percent in 1990 to 45.6 percent in 2002. Many women's jobs in the industry are part-time telephone sales positions.

Dr. Heidi Hartmann, President of IWPR and co-author of the report, noted that "women and minorities were once able to rely on the Communications and Media sector for decent wages and unbiased hiring practices. But as the sector restructures, women are losing out. The EEOC should target enforcement at this sector, and the FCC should reinstate reporting requirements."

Although total jobs gained exceed total jobs lost in the sector, employment growth in the sector (14 percent) has not kept pace with employment growth in the economy as a whole (22 percent), and high-paying unionized jobs are being replaced by lower-paying non-unionized jobs. Forty-one percent of Wired Telecom employees belong to a union, and that industry has the highest pay in the sector, with median weekly earnings of \$729 for all non-supervisory workers. Unions add 47.5 percent to full-time wages in Wired Telecom--\$15,600 annually. Wireless and Other Telecom has a much lower rate of unionization (29.1 percent), and pays only \$619 a week.

Several key occupations are examined in detail in this study. Unions raise wages substantially in two with a high share of women employees: Customer Service Representatives and Operators. In Wired Telecom, unions turn customer service into a high-quality job by boosting earnings a phenomenal 75.1 percent (to \$872); 29.9 percent of these workers are unionized. In Wireless and Other Telecom, union membership increases earnings 34.6 percent (to \$750), but the unionization rate is lower—19.6 percent. Unionization is also very high among operators (36.3 percent in Wired Telecom, the only industry with this occupation), and the union earnings premium is very large (64.8 percent), bringing earnings to \$633 for union members working full-time.

The radio broadcasting industry lost 8,000 jobs in the last 15 years. This industry has experienced dramatic ownership consolidation in response to relaxation of restrictions on market-share holdings. “Policy makers should pay close attention to the impact of changes in this sector on job quality and diversity,” says Dr. Vicky Lovell, Director of Employment and Work/Life Programs at IWPR and one of the report’s co-authors. “This is not the time to reverse the progress toward equality of employment that the FCC helped support in past decades. Newsrooms and broadcast content that lack minority and female representation do not serve a democracy well.”

Women and minorities face a wage gap in all Communications and Media industries. While white men earn \$769 weekly in the sector, minority men (including Hispanics) earn \$630, white women earn \$598, and minority women only \$526 weekly. Barbara Gault, Director of Research and Vice President of IWPR, says, “There is no rational explanation for the fact that women of color are earning less than all other workers in the Communications and Media Sector. We need to take a hard look at the subtle and not-so-subtle discrimination and segregation that persist here, and may even be growing, and make sure that we strengthen, rather than weaken, job protections for workers in these industries.”

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund released a companion report on July 26. *Employment Trends in the Communications and Media Industries* discusses how rapid media consolidation over the last decade threatens the quality of job opportunities for women and minorities. The report is available at: [http://www.civilrights.org/issues/communication/employment\\_trends.pdf](http://www.civilrights.org/issues/communication/employment_trends.pdf).

*The Institute for Women’s Policy Research conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, health and safety, and women’s civic and political participation. For more information on women’s earnings and the Communication’s and Media Sector, see [www.iwpr.org](http://www.iwpr.org).*

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