

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Gender Wage Gap Narrows only Slightly Even though Women's Earnings Are More Important than Ever to American Families

A new Fact Sheet released today by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, based on data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, shows that in 2009 median weekly earnings for women were \$657 compared with \$819 for men, a female-to-male-earnings ratio of 80.2 percent (making for a weekly gender wage gap of 19.8 percent). While the weekly gender wage gap narrowed slightly in 2009, it is still above its lowest point of 19 percent in 2005. Only full-time workers are included in this measure. An alternative measure of the gender wage gap, based on median annual earnings, is not yet available for 2009; in 2008 it was 22.9 percent.

The latest unemployment figures, released Friday, March 5, provide some good news for American workers in that large job losses and increases in unemployment did not occur, as had been widely expected because of severe weather in the Northeast. For men, unemployment fell from 10.8 to 10.7 percent. The picture for women was more mixed. On the one hand, the latest unemployment figures show a welcome drop in unemployment for women who maintain families – down to 11.6 percent from its historic high of 13.0 percent in December 2009. But on the other hand, the unemployment for all women rose from 8.4 to 8.6 percent. As the economic recovery proceeds, sectors where men predominately work, especially manufacturing, are beginning to recover, whereas sectors where women predominately work, such as in education for example, are seeing declines because of state and local budget cuts.

During 2009, women's share of all employees on payrolls has edged up slightly, and continues at 49.9 percent (compared with 49.6 percent 12 months ago). As women's share of the labor force continues to grow, families increasingly rely on women's earnings. "The persistent gender wage gap is selling families short. More and more families rely on women's earnings to keep them afloat, yet women continue to have to be better educated and work harder to earn the same as men," says Ariane Hegewisch, a study director at the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

The gender wage gap is particularly harmful to African American and Hispanic/Latina families. On average African American women only make 68.9 cents for every dollar earned by a white man per week, and Latina women only 60.2 cents.

"More effort to stimulate the economy and create jobs that pay decent wages regardless of gender or race is desperately needed. The average time unemployed continues to increase and American families need more relief from the recession. Women, especially those who support families on their own, would benefit from equal access to good jobs and equal pay," stated Dr. Heidi Hartmann, President of the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

View the new Fact Sheet here: <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/C350.pdf>

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies. IWPR's work is supported by foundation grants, government grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations and corporations. IWPR is a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organization that also works in affiliation with the women's studies and public policy programs at The George Washington University.