

News Release

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On Equal Pay Day, Study Finds Women Earn Less Than Men – Whether They Do the Same Job or Different Jobs

Whether they work in the same occupations as men or work in different occupations, women's median earnings are lower than men's, according to a new analysis by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). Using the most recent data for full-time workers released by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics the study finds that there are only four occupations, out of the 108 occupations with enough men and women to estimate earnings for both groups, where women earn more than men. In the 104 others, women's median earnings are less.

The occupation where women have the highest earnings compared with men is 'dining room and cafeteria attendants and bartender helpers' (the female/ male earnings ratio is 111.1 percent, based on median weekly earnings in 2009 that were \$400 for women, \$360 for men), an occupation that ranks among the ten lowest paid occupations for men, with average earnings for both men and women well below median earnings for all workers.

The pay gap is widest for 'physicians and surgeons,' an occupation that ranks among the Ten Highest Paid Occupations for both men and women; the female/male earnings ratio is 64.2 percent, based on median weekly earnings of \$1,182 for women, and \$1,914 for men).

The data show strong occupational segregation – women working in occupations primarily done by women, and men in occupations primarily done by men. The share of men and women who worked in 'traditional occupations' (where their sex accounts for at least 75% of workers) fell slightly in 2009- but still characterizes the jobs of four of ten women, and over four of ten men; the change since 2008 is likely due to the recession; job losses were particularly severe in predominantly male sectors like construction. Compared with men, women are slightly more likely to work in nontraditional occupations (where the other gender are at least 75 percent of the workforce) – 5.5 percent of women compared with 4.5 percent of men. Typically occupations where women are in the minority have higher average earnings than occupations with a high share of women.

Historical data on occupational segregation since 1972, based on the Index of Dissimilarity, shows that until the mid 1990s, occupations became more integrated. Yet since the mid 1990s there has been no further progress. We are still as unlikely to see female carpenters, and mechanical engineers or male Pre-school and kindergarten teachers, as we were 25 years ago.

Ariane Hegewisch, a Study Director at IWPR, says:

"The occupational earnings data show that we still rate men's work higher than the work done by women. Men are more likely to work in the highest paid occupations; male dominated occupations on

average pay more than female dominated occupations, and when men and women work in the same occupation, they earn more than women. Women and their families lose out as a result.”

Barbara Gault, Executive Director of IWPR, says: “Job segregation by sex is such a common characteristic of our labor market that most of us hardly notice it. Yet women will not achieve equity in our society until we’ve made all jobs, and especially the best jobs, accessible to all people.”

Heidi Hartmann, President of IWPR, comments: “The wage gap is present in virtually every occupation, and until we have equal pay laws that truly compel employers to change their practices, we will see women losing out not only in terms of pay today, but in their ability to care for themselves and their families into retirement.”

A Note on the Calculation of the Wage Gap

The weekly gender wage gap in 2009 was 19.8 percent (reflecting a female/male earnings ratio of 80.2 percent, based on median full-time weekly earnings of \$657 for women, and \$819 for men). This is marginally lower than the weekly gender wage gap in 2008 of 20.1 percent (or earnings ratio of 79.9 percent). (The annual earnings gap for 2008 was 22.9 in 2008; annual data for 2009 are not yet available).

View the updated Fact Sheet here: <http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/C350a.pdf>

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