



Fact Sheet

IWPR #C350

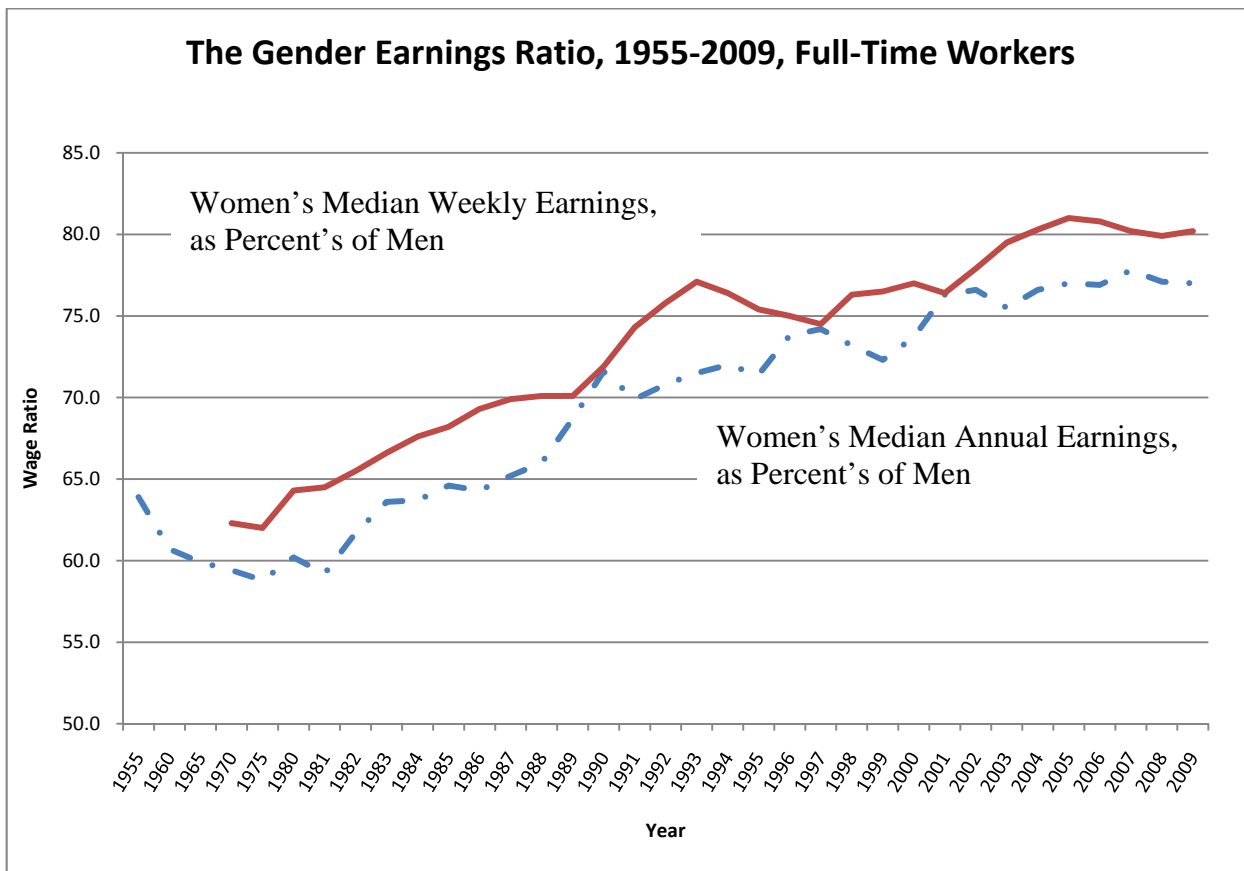
Updated September 2010

The Gender Wage Gap: 2009

The ratio of women's and men's median annual earnings, was 77.0 for full-time, year-round workers in 2009, essentially unchanged from 77.1 in 2008. (This means the gender wage gap for full-time year-round workers is now 22.9 percent.) This is below the peak of 77.8 percent in 2007.

An alternative measure of the wage gap, the ratio of women's to men's median weekly earnings for full-time workers – was 80.2 in 2009, which is essentially flat since the historical high of 81.0 in 2005.

Both earnings ratios (for weekly full-time workers and for year-round full-time workers) reflect gender differences in both hourly wages and the number of hours worked each year (above the definition of full-time). If part-time and part-year workers are included, the ratios would be much lower, as women are more likely than men to work reduced schedules in order to manage childrearing and other caregiving work. Nonetheless, the recession has forced 4.5 million men and 1.3 million women into part-time or part-year employment, dragging down the median annual earnings of all men by 4.1 percent since 2007, and dropping women's annual earnings by 2.8 percent over the same time period.



The annual ratio for full-time year-round workers, which includes self-employed workers, tends to be slightly lower than the ratio for weekly earnings (which includes full-time workers who work only part of the year). The two series exhibit the same general trend over the long term (even though they often move in different directions in the short-term). The earnings gap tends to become smaller during recessions. That pattern does not hold in this recession because the men who were able to hold onto full-time year-round jobs had, on average, higher-wage jobs than similarly situated women.

Progress in closing the gender earnings gap has slowed considerably since the early 1990s, as measured by both data series. While the gender earnings ratio for full-time employees increased by 12.9 percentage points from 1980 to 1993, it grew by only 3.1 percentage points over the next 16 years. For full-time, full-year workers, the figure increased by 11.3 percentage points during the first period and by only 5.5 percentage points in the second period.

Information about gender wage ratios by race and ethnicity is available in IWPR's *Economic Status of Women of Color in the United States* web page, <http://www.iwpr.org/femstats/wocdata.htm> (Table 1), and in U.S. Census Bureau, *Historical Income Tables*, Table P-40 (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/p40.html>).

As illustrated by Table 1, Black and Hispanic workers of both sexes earn considerably less than white males, and the wage gap is particularly marked for women of color (except for Asian American women). African American women earned on average only 61.9 cents for every dollar earned by white men, and Hispanic women earned only 52.9 cents for each dollar earned by white men. The relatively high earnings of Asian Americans are related to historically high rates of educational attainment within this group, although even here a gender gap remains (82.3 cents).

Table 1: Annual Earnings, 2009, for Year-Round Full-time Workers aged 15 and Older by Race and Ethnic Background

Race and Ethnicity	Male	Female	Women's Earnings as % of White Male Earnings*
All Races	47,127	36,278	77.0%
White Alone, not Hispanic	51,405	38,533	75.0%
Black or African American only	37,496	31,824	61.9%
Asian only	51,760	42,331	82.3%
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	31,393	27,181	52.9%

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research Compilation of Current Population Survey Labor Force Statistics, 2009
http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032010/perinc/new05_001.htm (retrieved September 16 2010)

*The ratio for All Races is for Male and Females of All Races

Closing the gender wage gap is not a zero-sum game – gains for one gender do not require losses for the other. For the gender wage gap to close, women's real wages must rise faster than men's but, as the economy begins to grow, real wages should rise for both men and women. Yet, as can be seen from Table 2, since 1980 real wages for men have remained virtually unchanged, while women's real earnings increased across the same time period. Women's earnings have become increasingly important to family incomes, and further progress is possible.

Table 2: The Gender Wage Ratio and Real Earnings, 1955-2009, Full-Time Workers

Year	Median Annual Earnings, Women, adjusted to 2009 dollars	Median Annual Earnings, Men, adjusted to 2009 dollars	Median Annual Earnings Ratio, Full-Year Workers	Median Weekly Earnings, Women, adjusted to 2009 dollars	Median Weekly Earnings, Men, adjusted to 2009 dollars	Median Weekly Earnings Ratio
1955			63.9			
1960	23,606	38,907	60.7			
1965	26,071	43,507	59.9			
1970	29,432	49,576	59.4			62.3
1975	29,924	50,875	58.8			62.0
1980	29,153	48,458	60.2	523	815	64.2
1981	28,324	47,816	59.2	517	802	64.4
1982	28,932	46,858	61.7	531	809	65.7
1983	29,973	47,131	63.6	543	816	66.5
1984	30,518	47,941	63.7	547	809	67.6
1985	31,152	48,241	64.6	552	811	68.1
1986	31,773	49,437	64.3	570	820	69.5
1987	31,937	49,000	65.2	572	820	69.8
1988	31,928	48,341	66.0	571	814	70.2
1989	32,473	47,286	68.7	567	810	70.1
1990	32,537	45,432	71.6	568	790	71.9
1991	32,374	46,343	69.9	577	777	74.2
1992	32,685	46,175	70.8	581	766	75.8
1993	32,287	45,145	71.5	583	757	77.1
1994	32,144	44,665	72.0	578	756	76.4
1995	31,670	44,338	71.4	572	757	75.5
1996	32,420	43,952	73.8	572	762	75
1997	33,381	45,011	74.2	576	774	74.4
1998	34,039	46,520	73.2	600	787	76.3
1999	33,888	46,862	72.3	609	796	76.5
2000	34,214	46,411	73.7	614	799	76.9
2001	35,391	46,366	76.3	620	812	76.4
2002	36,018	47,020	76.6	631	810	77.9
2003	35,823	47,417	75.5	644	810	79.4
2004	35,480	46,333	76.6	651	810	80.4
2005	34,996	45,463	77.0	643	793	81
2006	34,602	44,973	76.9	639	791	80.8
2007	36,320	46,678	77.8	635	793	80.2
2008	35,618	46,202	77.1	636	795	79.9
2009	36,278	47,127	77.0	657	819	80.2

Notes: Annual earnings data include self-employed workers; weekly data are for wage and salary workers only. Annual earnings are for workers aged 14 and older through 1979 and workers 15 and older from 1980 through 2009; weekly earnings are for full-time workers aged 16 and older and are not restricted to full-year workers. Annual data are typically released in late summer or early fall by the U.S. Census Bureau; the annual average of weekly median earnings is usually released in January by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Both data series are derived from the Current Population Survey.

Sources: Annual data: 1955: Francine D. Blau and Marianne A. Ferber, *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1992), Table 5.6 1960 through 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2009*, Table A-4. Weekly data: 1970 and 1975: Blau and Ferber (1992), Table 5.6; 1980 through 2005: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Highlights of Women's Earnings in 2005*, Table 13; 2006 and 2007: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Usual Weekly Earnings Summary*, January 2008, Table 6; 2008: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 2009, Table 39.

For more information about IWPR reports or membership, please call (202) 785-5100,
e-mail iwpr@iwpr.org, or visit www.iwpr.org.

IWPR conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and society. The Institute 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.