Fact Sheet 2010

PROFESSIONAL WOMEN: VITAL STATISTICS

General Statistics

- The number of working women has risen from 5.1 million in 1900, to 18.4 million in 1950,[1] to 66.2 million in 2009.[2] The number of women in the labor force is projected to be more than 78 million by 2018.[3]
- Women accounted for 18% of the labor force in 1900,[4] and 46.7% in 2008.[5] In 2018, women will account for 46.9% of the labor force.[6]
- The annual growth rate for women in the labor force is expected to be 0.9% between 2008 and 2018. Even though this is slower than previously projected, it is still faster than the projected annual growth rate of 0.7 % for men. This means men's share of the labor force will decrease, from 53.3% to 53.1% between 2008 and 2018.[7]
- While in 1900 only 20.4% of all women worked,[8] between 1997 and 2008, almost 60% of women worked.[9]
- About 73% of working women had white collar occupations in 2009, a percentage that is expected to increase. Women employed in professional and related occupations accounted for 26.6% of all working women in 2009.[10]
- Women make up the majority (57.5% and 57.2%, respectively) of professional and related occupations and service occupations,[11] the occupations expected to grow most rapidly (16.8% and 13.8%, respectively) from 2008–18.[12]
- Labor force participation has increased most dramatically among married women.[13]
- Today most mothers—even those with the youngest children—participate in the labor force.[14]
- About half of all multiple job-holders in 2008 were women, up from 22% in 1974. Women are the majority of temporary and part-time workers.[15]

Women Earn More Degrees

- Women have been earning more bachelor's degrees than men since 1982 and they have been earning more master's degrees than men since 1981. They are projected to earn 59% of all postsecondary degrees conferred in 2008.[16]
- Women are projected to earn 52% of professional degrees conferred in 2008–09, up from 2.6% in 1961.[17]
- Women are projected to earn 52.7% of all doctoral degrees in 2008–09, while in 1961 they earned only 10.5% of all doctoral degrees.[18]
- The proportion of women in law school increased from 3.7% in 1963 to 44% in the academic year 2007–08.[19]

- The proportion of women in medical school increased from 5.8% in the academic year 1960–61 to almost 49% in the academic year 2007–08.[20]
- Between academic years 1959–60 and 2005–06, the percentage of degrees in dentistry earned by women increased from 0.8% to 44.5%.[21]

Occupational Distribution Differs Between Men and Women

While women are the majority of professional employees, their occupational distribution remains different from men:[22]

- In 2009, 92% of registered nurses, 81.9% of all elementary and middle school teachers, and 97.8% of all preschool and kindergarten teachers were women.[23]
- In comparison, only 7.1% of all civil engineers, 9.4% of electrical and electronics engineers, and 10% of all aerospace engineers were female.[24]
- In 2004, only 37% of all Screen Actors' Guild television and theatrical roles went to women.[25] In 2006, only 26% of all female roles went to women over the age of 40, while men over 40 got 40% of all male roles.[26]

Still, the different distribution of men and women among specific professional occupations was less pronounced in 2009 than in 1985:

- The percentage of technical writers who were female increased from 36% to 50.4% between 1985 and 2009.
- Women pharmacists increased from 30% in 1985 to 49.3% in 2009.
- The percentage of female chemists increased from 11% in 1985 to 30% in 2009.
- In 2008, women accounted for 32.4% of all lawyers, 32.2% of all physicians and surgeons, and 68.8% of all psychologists.[27]

The Wage Gap Persists

The wage gap between sexes still plagues the American workforce. In 2007, the Center for American Progress (CAP) found that women earn 78 cents on a dollar for every dollar a man earns in a year.[28] The gender wage gap has extreme costs for women over the course of their careers. CAP found that the average female worker loses approximately $434,000 in wages over a 40-year period as a direct result of pay inequities.[29] Out of 23 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the United States has the seventh largest gender earnings gap. The gender wage gap in the United States is 21.6%, well above the OECD average of 18.5%.[30]

In 2009, women's median weekly earnings were only 80.2% of men's median weekly earnings. For most women of color, the earnings gap was even larger:[31]

- African American women earned 71 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2009.[32]
- Hispanic and Latina women earned just 62 cents for every dollar men earned.[33]
- Only Asian American women's earnings were closer to parity with men's: in 2009, they earned 95 cents for every dollar earned by men. However, they earned 81.8% as much as Asian American men.[34]

The wage gap is also more pronounced for older women: in 2009, women over 25 earned 78.7% that of men in the same age group while women aged 16–24 earned 92.6% as much as their male peers.[35]

The support and opportunity for women to pursue careers in fields like science, technology, engineering and mathematics is important for working towards pay equity. In science and engineering, for example, women are still paid less than men but tend to earn more than similarly educated women in other sectors of the workforce. The average starting salary for someone with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering, for example, was just over $59,000. By comparison, the average starting salary for an individual with a bachelor's degree in economics was just under $50,000.[36]

Equal pay, however, remains a problem in every occupational category, even in occupations where women considerably outnumber men. In 2009, certain professions showed a significant gap:[37]

- Women in professional and related occupations earned over 26% less than their male counterparts, while women in sales and office occupations earned 20% less than similarly employed men.
- Female elementary and middle school teachers earned over 14% less than similarly employed men, despite comprising almost 82% of the field.[38]
- Female registered nurses earned more than 5% less than their male colleagues, although over 90% of nurses are women.[39]
- Female physicians and surgeons earned a whopping 36% less than their male counterparts.
- Female college and university teachers earned over 15% less than those who were male.
- Female lawyers earned 25% less than male lawyers.

Women also earn less at every level of education. For full-time workers aged 25 and older in 2007:

- The median annual earnings of a female high school graduate was 26% less than that of her male counterpart.
- The median annual earnings of a woman with a bachelor's degree was almost 25% (or on average $16,058) less than that of a similarly qualified man.
- Women are more likely to complete graduate education. A woman with a master's degree earned 25% (or on average $19,250) less than a man with a master's degree.
- The median annual earnings for a woman with a professional degree was $65,912 while men earned over $90,000.
- A woman with a doctoral degree earned more than 22% (or on average $18,054) less than a similarly qualified man.[40]
- According to a recent report by the American Association of University Women, women who attended highly selective colleges earn less than men from either highly or moderately selective colleges and about the same as men from minimally selective colleges.
- Men and women remain segregated by college major, with women making up 79% of education majors and men making up 82% of engineering majors. This segregation is found in the workplace as well, where women make up 74% of the education field and men make up 84% of the engineering and architecture fields.[41]
- According to a study by the Center for American Progress, women at all educational

levels suffer long term affects from the wage gap. Women with less than a high school diploma will earn on average $270,000 less over a 40 year time period than their male counterparts. The differences are even larger as educational attainment grows. Women with a high school degree will earn, on average, $392,000 less, women with some college will earn $452,000 less, and women with a bachelor's degree or higher will earn $713,000 less than their male counterparts over a 40-year period.[42]

Because women are paid less when they work, they receive smaller Social Security benefits when they retire:

- Women represent 57% of all Social Security beneficiaries age 62 and older and approximately 69% of beneficiaries age 85 and older.[43]
- In 2006, the average Social Security income received by women 65 years and older was $10,685, compared with $14,055 for men.[44]
- In 2007, 47% of unmarried women receiving Social Security benefits relied on Social Security for 90% or more of their income.[45]
- In 2006, the average Social Security retirement benefit was 25.5% smaller for women than men. Sixty-eight point seven percent of women receive a monthly benefit of under $1,000 while 70% of men receive more than $1,000 per month.[46]
- In 2007, for unmarried women age 65 and older, Social Security comprised 48% of their total income. In contrast, Social Security benefits comprised only 37% of unmarried elderly men's income and only 30% of elderly couples' income.[47]
- In 2006, only 29.2% of women 65 and older received any form of pension or annuity income and the median amount was $6,420. For men, 43.8% received pensions or annuity income and the median amount was $12,000.[48]
- Participation in employer-sponsored retirement plans is increasing for women in today's workforce. In 2007, 52.6% of women employed full-time participated in an employer-sponsored plan compared to 51.6% of men. Women generally receive lower pension benefits due to their relatively lower earnings.[49]
- The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) estimates that unmarried women receive approximately $8,000 less in annual retirement income than their male counterparts. Two-thirds of this disparity is directly attributable to the wage gap and employment segregation.[50]

Changes for American Families

On average, the families of working women lose out on $9,575 per year because of the earnings gap. Over time, this adds up to a very significant loss. For instance, by 2004, women who were aged 24–29 in 1984 had lost over $440 million in the intervening 20 years just because of the gender wage gap.[51] Working families lose $200 billion in the United States annually.[52]

- In 2008, nearly 50% of women were not married and 53.2% of these unmarried women were in the labor force.[53]
- The proportion of families in which the husband, but not the wife, worked outside the home declined from 66% in the 1940's and '50s to only 17.76% in 2007.[54]
- The overall labor force participation rate of mothers with children under 18 was 71.2% in 2008.[55]

- Whereas in 1970, 12% of all children lived in one parent families, in 2007 almost 26% lived with only one parent. About 86% of these children lived with their mothers.[56]
- In 2007, nearly 10 million families with children under 18 were headed by a single mother.[57] The labor force participation rate of single mothers was 75.5% in 2008.[58]
- About 37% of families where children under 18 lived with their mother (with no father present) were below the poverty level in 2007. Among Black single mothers, 43.7% were below the poverty line.[59]
- By contrast, married couple families with children under 18 had the lowest poverty rate (6.7% in 2007).[60]
- A report by the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that if women were paid fairly the income of single women would rise 13.4%, single mothers would earn 17% more, and married women would earn 6% more. These increases would lead to reductions in poverty of 84% for single women, 50% for single mothers, and 62% for married women.[61]
- Reducing work-family conflict is an important goal which would benefit all working parents. According to a report by the American Association of University Women, survey results found that a majority of both men (74%) and women (83%) would choose a job that had lower pay but provided benefits such as family leave, flexible hours, and help with family care.[62] In 2004, full time male workers were more likely to have flexible schedules at their workplace—28.1% of men versus 26.7% of women. Flextime and similar options can be important supports for working mothers.[63]

High Costs to Care Giving

According to a recent study conducted by the Project on Global Working Families, the United States ranks low on a list of 173 nations when it comes to protecting workers' family lives. U.S. policies fail to protect the role of women as mothers and caretakers:

- The U.S. guarantees no paid leave for mothers in any segment of the work force. Only three other nations studied share this quality: Liberia, Papua New Guinea, and Swaziland, and 169 guarantee leave with income in connection to childbirth.[64]
- Women need time for parental involvement and to take care of sick family members. One hundred and thirty-seven countries mandate paid annual leave and 121 countries guarantee two weeks or more each year. More than 81 countries provide sickness benefits for at least 26 weeks or until recovery. The U.S. does not require employers to provide any paid annual leave and as a result, more women work long hours, nights, and weekends.[65]
- The U.S. provides only unpaid leave for serious illnesses through the FMLA, which does not cover all workers. Moreover, the U.S. does not guarantee any paid sick days for common illnesses. One hundred and forty-five countries provide paid leave for short- or long-term illnesses, with 136 countries providing a week or more annually.[66]

The availability of affordable childcare can have a large impact on women's choices regarding work. Childcare can be prohibitively expensive: in 2002, the OECD estimated that the cost of center-based care for two children in the U.S. could amount to as much as 37% of a single parent's income. This is a considerably larger portion than almost all other OECD countries.[67] Even for two-parent families of all income brackets, childcare tends to be the second-largest household expenditure, after housing costs.[68] According to the OECD, depending on the state,

parents pay on average more than $3,000 annually per child for child care, with low-income families paying on average 18% of their income. For families earning less than $1,200 per month, 25% of their income goes to child care.[69]

In countries with a high degree of childcare support programs, the labor force participation rate of women with young children is much higher. In 2004, participation in childcare services for children under three years old was 35.5% in the United States, while in Denmark childcare participation rates were nearly 62%. Greater childcare subsidies allow more women to work and help families provide care for their children in Denmark.[70]

Women and the Union Advantage

Today, nearly 6.9 million working women are union members and over 7.7 million are represented by unions.[71]

Many of the unions organizing in industries dominated by women, such as education and government, have consistently shown much higher win rates than those unions organizing in industries with fewer women members.[72] The union difference is quite apparent when you look at the median weekly wages in predominantly female and consequently lesser paid occupations: union preschool and kindergarten teachers earned 47% more than their non-union counterparts, while for elementary and middle school teachers, the union wage advantage was 30%. In 2008, union librarians earned 25% more than their non-union counterparts, while union social workers and counselors earned 20% and 32% more, respectively. For RNs, the union difference was 18%.[73]

Union women and men are more likely than non-union workers to have health and pension benefits, and to receive paid holidays and vacations, and life and disability insurance.[74]

- In 2009, 44.9% of all union members were women, up from 19% in 1962.[75]
- In 2009, union women earned weekly wages that were 24.6% more than non-union women.[76] Thus, union membership narrows the gender wage gap.

African American and Hispanic or Latina women also benefit from union membership:[77]

- The median weekly earnings of African American union women were 22% more than their non-union counterparts.
- Hispanic and Latina women who were union members had median weekly earnings that were 28% higher than their non-union counterparts.

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For further information on professional workers, check out DPE's Web site: www.dpeaflcio.org.

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) comprises 23 AFL-CIO unions representing over four million people working in professional, technical and administrative support occupations. DPE-affiliated unions represent: teachers, college professors and school administrators; library workers; nurses, doctors and other health care professionals; engineers, scientists and IT workers; journalists and writers, broadcast technicians and communications specialists; performing and visual artists; professional athletes; professional firefighters; psychologists, social workers and many others. DPE was chartered by the AFL-CIO in 1977 in recognition of the rapidly-growing professional and technical occupations.

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