



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, to nearly 65 million in 2004. The number of working women is projected to exceed 77 million by 2012.¹
- Women accounted for 18% of the labor force in 1900, and 47% in 2004. In 2012, women will account for 48% of the labor force.²
- The number of women in the labor force is expected to increase by more than 14% between 2002 and 2012, while a 10% increase is projected for men.³
- While in 1900 only 20.4% of all women worked, in 2003, more than 60% worked. Sixty-two percent of women are expected to be in the paid labor force by 2012.⁴
- Almost 73% of working women had white collar occupations in 2004, a percentage that is expected to increase. Women employed in professional and related occupations accounted for 24.5% of all working women in 2004.⁵
- Women are the majority of workers in the occupational category expected to grow most rapidly: the professional and related occupations, which are expected to increase by more than 23% from 2002–2012.⁶
- Labor force participation has increased most dramatically among married women.⁷
- Today most mothers—even those with the youngest children—participate in the labor force.⁸
- Half of all multiple job-holders in 2004 were women, up from 20% in 1973.⁹ Women are the majority of temporary and part-time workers.¹⁰

Occupational Distribution

- While women are the majority of professional employees, their occupational distribution remains different from men.
 - 92% of registered nurses, 81% of all elementary and middle school teachers, 98% of all preschool and kindergarten teachers, and 99% of all dental hygienists employed in 2004 were women, compared with 6% of all mechanical engineers, 8% of electrical and electronics engineers, 3% of all aircraft pilots and flight engineers, and 22% of all dentists.¹¹
- Still, the different distribution of men and women among specific professional occupations was less pronounced in 2004 than in 1985.
 - The percentage of technical writers who were female increased from 36% to 66% between 1985 and 2004.¹²
 - Women pharmacists increased from 30% in 1985 to 47% in 2004.¹³
 - The percentage of female chemists increased from 11% in 1985 to 33% in 2004.¹⁴
- In 2004, women accounted for 29% of all lawyers, 29% of all physicians and surgeons, and 67% of all psychologists.¹⁵

The Wage Gap Persists

- In 2003, women earned 76 cents for every dollar earned by men, down from 77 cents in 2002. For women of color, the gap was wider. African American women earned 66% as much as men (down from 68% in 2002), and Latina women earned only 55% of men's weekly earnings (down from 56%). While Asian American women do better, they still earn only 80% as much as men.¹⁶
- The gap between the wages of men and women is larger in the U.S. than in Germany, Britain, France, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and New Zealand.¹⁷
- America's working families lose \$200 billion of income annually to the wage gap—an average loss of more than \$4,000 each for a working women's families every year because of unequal pay.¹⁸
- Equal pay is a problem in every occupational category
 - In 2004, women in professional and related occupations earned almost 27% less than their male counterparts;¹⁹
- Women in office and administrative support occupations earned over 11% less than those who were men;²⁰
- Women in sales occupations earned 38% less than similarly employed men, while women in service occupations earned almost 16% less than men in these occupations.²¹
- More specifically, in 2004:
 - female physicians and surgeons earned a whopping 46% less than their male counterparts;²²
 - female postsecondary teachers earned 24% less than those who were male;²³
 - female lawyers earned 27% less than male lawyers;²⁴ and
 - female computer scientists and systems analysts earned 17% less than similarly employed men, while female computer programmers earned 13% less.²⁵
- The wage gap exists even in occupations where women considerably outnumber men. In 2004:
 - female elementary and middle school teachers earned more than 15% less than similarly employed men, while female secondary school teachers earned 14% less than male;²⁶
 - female registered nurses earned 13% less than their male colleagues;²⁷ and
 - female counselors earned 17% less than male.²⁸
- For full-time workers aged 25 and older in 2004:
 - the median income of a female high school graduate was more than 24% less than that of her male counterpart;²⁹
 - the median income of a women with a bachelor's degree was 24% (or \$13,104) less than that of a similarly qualified man;³⁰
 - a women with an advanced degree—a master's, professional, or doctoral degree—earned 28% (\$20,176) less than a similarly qualified man.³¹
- Because women are paid less when they work, they receive smaller pensions (and Social Security checks) when they retire. Less than half of all wage and salaried women in the U.S. participate in a pension plan. Half of all older women with income from a private pension receive less than \$5,600 a year, compared with \$10,340 for older men.³²

Women's Economic Responsibilities

- In 2003, 49% of women were not married; almost 60% of all women were in the labor force. Seventy-one percent of women without children worked.³³
- 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 20% in 2003. in that same year, 6.8% of wives worked while their husbands did not.³⁴

- In 2003, 82% of all single-parent families were headed by the mother; 78% of these single mothers were in the labor force. The overall labor force participation rate for mothers with children under 18 was 71.1% in 2003.³⁵
- Whereas in 1970, 12% of all children lived in one parent families, in 2003 almost 32% lived with only one parent. Seventy-three percent of these children lived with their mothers.³⁶
- In 2003, more than 15% of all working families were headed by a single mother.³⁷
- Almost 32% of families where children under 18 lived with their mother (with no father present) were below the poverty level in 2003. For single-parent households headed by the father, only 16% were below the poverty level.³⁸
- By contrast, married couple families had the lowest poverty rate (6%).³⁹

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 expected to earn 57% of all bachelor's and 58% of all master's degrees conferred in 2005.⁴⁰
- Women are expected to earn more than 47% of the first professional degrees conferred in 2004, up from 2.6% in 1961.⁴¹
- Women are expected to earn 47% of all doctoral degrees in 2005, while in 1961 they earned only 10.5% of all doctoral degrees.⁴²
- The proportion of women in law school increased from 3.7% in 1963 to more than 48% in academic year 2004–05.⁴³
- The proportion of women in medical school increased from 5.8% in academic year 1960–61 to 49% in 2004.⁴⁴
- Between academic years 1959–60 and 2000–01, the percentage of degrees in dentistry earned by women increased from 0.8% to 39%.⁴⁵

Women and Unions

- Today nearly 6.6 million working women are union members, and 7.5 million are represented by unions.⁴⁶
- In 2004, 44% of all union members were women, up from 19% in 1962.⁴⁷
- Women are forming and joining unions at a faster rate than men. Fifty-five percent of all newly organized workers are women.⁴⁸

The Union Advantage for Women

- In 2003, union women earned weekly wages that were 25% more than women who were not union members, while union men earned 17% more than nonunion men.⁴⁹
- The differences are even more marked for African American and Latina women:
 - the median weekly earnings of African American union women were more than 26% more than their nonunion counterparts;⁵⁰
 - Latina women who were union members and median weekly earnings that were almost 34% higher than their nonunion counterparts.⁵¹
- Union women and men are more likely than nonunion workers to have health and pension benefits, and to receive paid holidays and vacations, and life and disability insurance.⁵²

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5 *Employment and Earnings*, op. cit.

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- 49–51 *BLS News*, op. cit.
- 52 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *BLS News*, USDL: 03-489.

For more information about professional women, see “*Salaried and Professional Women: Relevant Statistics*” on our Website: www.dpeaflcio.org

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) comprises 25 AFL-CIO unions representing four million people working in professional, technical and administrative support occupations. DPE-affiliated unions represent: teachers, college professors, librarians and school administrators; 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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