



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 65.7 million in 2005.² The number of working women is projected to reach nearly 76 million by 2014.³
- Women accounted for 18% of the labor force in 1900,⁴ and 46.4% in 2005.⁵ In 2014, women will account for 46.8% of the labor force.⁶
- The number of women in the labor force is expected to increase by almost 10.9% between 2004 and 2014, while a smaller 9.1% increase is projected for men. This means men's share of the labor force will decrease, from 53.6% to 53.2% between 2004 and 2014.⁷
- While in 1900 only 20.4% of all women worked,⁸ in 2005, almost 60% worked.⁹ The same percentage of women are expected to be in the paid labor force in 2014.¹⁰
- Almost 73% of working women had white collar occupations in 2005, a percentage that is expected to increase. Women employed in professional and related occupations accounted for 24.7% of all working women in 2005.¹¹
- Women are the majority (56.3%) of workers in the occupational category expected to grow most rapidly: the professional and related occupations, which are expected to increase by more than 21.2% from 2004–2014.¹²
- 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
- Nearly half of all multiple job-holders in 2004 were women, up from 22% in 1974. Women are the majority of temporary and part-time workers.¹⁵

Occupational Distribution

- While women are the majority of professional employees, their occupational distribution remains different from men:¹⁶
 - In 2005, 92% of registered nurses, 82% of all elementary and middle school teachers, and 98% of all preschool and kindergarten teachers were women.
 - In comparison, only 13% of all civil engineers, 7% of electrical and electronics engineers, and 3% of all aircraft pilots and flight engineers were female.
- In 2004, only 37% of all Screen Actors' Guild television and theatrical roles went to women. Furthermore, only 27% of all female roles went to women over the age of 40, while men over 40 got 39% of all male roles.¹⁷

- Still, the different distribution of men and women among specific professional occupations was less pronounced in 2005 than in 1985.¹⁸
 - The percentage of technical writers who were female increased from 36% to 52% between 1985 and 2005.
 - Women pharmacists increased from 30% in 1985 to 48% in 2005.
 - The percentage of female chemists increased from 11% in 1985 to 35% in 2005.
- In 2005, women accounted for 30% of all lawyers, 32% of all physicians and surgeons, and 67% of all psychologists.¹⁹

The Wage Gap Persists

- In 2004, women earned 80.4% as much as men, when comparing median weekly earnings. Another way to measure earnings disparities is by comparing median annual earnings for full-time year-round workers; this figure includes self-employed workers and other sources of pay differences such as annual bonuses. With this measure the wage gap is more pronounced: women earned just 76.5% as much as men.²⁰
- For most women of color, the earnings gap is even larger.²¹
 - African American women earned just 70.8% as much as all men in 2004.
 - Hispanic and Latina women earned just 58.8% as much as all men.
 - Only Asian American women's earnings were closer to parity with men's: in 2004, they earned 86% that of all men. However, they earned 76.4% as much as Asian American men.
- The wage gap is more pronounced for older women: in 2004, women over 35 earned 75% that of men in the same age group, while women aged 16–24 earned 95% as much as their peers.²²
- Out of 19 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the United States has the largest gender earnings gap, save for Austria and Switzerland.²³
- 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.²⁴
- Equal pay is a problem in every occupational category, even in occupations where women considerably outnumber men. In certain professions, the wage gap is particularly large. In 2005:²⁵
 - Women in professional and related occupations earned almost 32% less than their male counterparts, while women in sales and office occupations earned over 24% less than similarly employed men.
 - Female elementary and middle school teachers earned more than 10% less than similarly employed men, despite comprising 81.7% of the field.

- Female registered nurses earned 8% less than their male colleagues, despite the fact that 91.6% of nurses are women.
 - Female physicians and surgeons earned a whopping 39% less than their male counterparts.
 - Female college and university teachers earned 21% less than those who were male.
 - Female lawyers earned over 22% less than male lawyers.
- Women also earn less at every level of education. For full-time workers aged 18 and older in 2003:²⁶
 - The median annual earnings of a female high school graduate was more than 33% less than that of her male counterpart;
 - The median annual earnings of a woman with a bachelor's degree was almost 36% (or \$18,133) less than that of a similarly qualified man;
 - A woman with a master's degree earned 32% (or \$20,139) less than a man with a master's degree;
 - The median annual earnings of a woman with a professional degree was 44% (or \$43,963) less than that of her male counterpart; and
 - A woman with a doctoral degree earned more than 27% (or \$21,208) less than a similarly qualified man.
- 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.²⁷
 - The average Social Security retirement benefit was over 23% smaller for women than men in 2003.
 - For unmarried women over 65, Social Security comprises 52% of their total income, while it is only 38% of that of an unmarried elderly man.
 - For 29% of unmarried elderly women, Social Security is their only source of retirement income.²⁸

Work, Family, and Women's Economic Responsibilities

- In 2004, 49% of women were not married;²⁹ 58% of them were in the labor force.³⁰
- 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 18% in 2003.³¹
- The overall labor force participation rate of mothers with children under 18 was 70.7% in 2004.³²

- Whereas in 1970, 12% of all children lived in one parent families, in 2004 almost 28% lived with only one parent. Over 83% of these children lived with their mothers.³³
- In 2004, over seven million families with children under 18 were headed by a single mother—almost 30% of all working families. The labor force participation rate of single mothers was over 77% in 2004.³⁴
- Almost 36% of families where children under 18 lived with their mother (with no father present) were below the poverty level in 2004. Among Black single mothers, over 43% were below the poverty line.³⁵
- By contrast, married couple families with children under 18 had the lowest poverty rate (7% in 2004).³⁶
- 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.³⁷ Even for two-parent families of all income brackets, childcare tends to be the second-largest household expenditure, after housing costs.³⁸
- In countries with a high degree of childcare support programs, the labor force participation rate of women with young children is much higher. For instance, in 2004 57% of all women with children under age 3 worked,³⁹ while in Sweden in 2002 nearly 72% of women with 0–3 year olds worked.⁴⁰ Sweden offers families heavily subsidized childcare for which all children are eligible.⁴¹
- 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. The same study found that among college-educated adults, men are still more likely to have flextime options at their workplace—55.5% of men versus 39.7% of women. Flextime and similar options can be important supports for working mothers.⁴²

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 58% of all bachelor's and master's degrees conferred in 2004.⁴³
- Women are expected to earn more than 46% of the first professional degrees conferred in 2004, up from 2.6% in 1961.⁴⁴
- Women are expected to earn 44% of all doctoral degrees in 2004, while in 1961 they earned only 10.5% of all doctoral degrees.⁴⁵
- The proportion of women in law school increased from 3.7% in 1963 to more than 47% in academic year 2005–06.⁴⁶

- The proportion of women in medical school increased from 5.8% in academic year 1960–61 to almost 49% in academic year 2005–06.⁴⁷
- Between academic years 1959–60 and 2002–03, the percentage of degrees in dentistry earned by women increased from 0.8% to 39%.⁴⁸

Women and the Union Advantage

- Today over 6.8 million working women are union members.⁴⁹
- In 2005, 43.4% of all union members were women, up from 19% in 1962.⁵⁰
- Women, and especially women of color, are forming and joining unions at a faster rate than men. 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.⁵¹
- In 2005, union women earned weekly wages that were almost 30% more than women who were not union members, while union men earned 23.6% more than nonunion men.⁵²
- The differences are even more marked for African American and Hispanic or Latina women:⁵³
 - The median weekly earnings of African American union women were almost 32% more than their nonunion counterparts;
 - Hispanic and Latina women who were union members had median weekly earnings that were more than 46% higher than their nonunion counterparts.
- 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.

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⁵ *Employment and Earnings*, Annual Averages, Table 11, 2006, op. cit.

⁶ Toossi, Mitra, op. cit.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Perspectives on Working Women: A Databook”, 1980, op. cit.

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¹⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/ep/labor.force/clra0414.txt>

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¹⁵ “Women in the Labor Force: A Databook”, Tables 20 & 35, op. cit., <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-table20-2005.pdf>, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-table35-2005.pdf>

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¹⁷ Screen Actor’s Guild, 2004 Casting Data reports, <http://www.sag.org/Content/Public/castingdata.html>

¹⁸ *Employment and Earnings*, Annual Averages, Table 11, 1986 and 2006, op. cit.

¹⁹ *Employment and Earnings*, Annual Averages, Table 11, 2006, op. cit.

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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 22 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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April 2006