



PROFESSIONAL WOMEN: VITAL STATISTICS

FACT SHEET 2002–3

General Statistics

- In 1900, women constituted 18.1% of the labor force; in 2001, almost 47%. While in 1900 only 20.4% of all women worked, in 2001, 60% worked.
- Almost 73% of working women had white collar occupations in 2001, a percentage that is expected to increase.
- Women are the majority of workers in the occupational category expected to grow most rapidly: the professional and related occupations.
- Labor force participation has increased most dramatically among married women.
- Today most mothers—even those with the youngest children—participate in the labor force.
- Women's labor force participation rates will continue to increase, barring a very slight decrease for women aged 25–34.

Occupational Distribution

Large occupational categories can mask underlying differences in employment by gender.

- Over 93% of registered nurses and 82.5% of all elementary school teachers employed in 2001 were women, compared with 10.4% of all engineers and 3.5% of all airline pilots and navigators.
- The different distribution of men and women among specific occupations was less pronounced in 2001 than in 1975. Female operations and systems researchers and analysts increased from 15% in 1975 to almost 47% in 2001; among biological technicians, women increased from 43.2% in 1985 to 63.4% in 2001; and the percentage of female financial managers increased from 24% in 1975 to more than 50% in 2001.
- Women accounted for 29.3% of all lawyers, over 29% of all physicians, 48.1% of all pharmacists, and 52.3% of all economists in 2001.

The Wage Gap Persists

- In 2000, women earned 73% as much as men. For women of color, the gap was wider. Black women 64%, and Hispanic women 52%, of men's weekly earnings
- 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.
- America's working families lost \$200 billion of income annually to the wage gap—an average loss of more than \$4,000 each for working women's families every year because of unequal pay.
- Equal pay is a problem in every occupational category:
 - In 2001, professional women earned almost 27% less than male professionals;
 - female technicians earned 26% less than their male counterparts;
 - female administrative support (including clerical) workers earned 19% less than those who were male;
 - female sales workers earned 38% less than similarly employed men, while women in service occupations earned 23.5% less than men in service occupations.
- More specifically, in 2001:
 - Female college and university teachers earned 25% less than those who were male;
 - female physicians earned 32% less than those who were male;
 - female editors and reporters earned almost 19% less than those who were male;
 - female lawyers earned almost 31% less than male lawyers; and

- female computer systems analysts and scientists earned almost 24% less than similarly employed men.
- The wage gap exists even in occupations where women considerably outnumber men. In 2001:
 - Female teachers (excluding college and university faculty) earned over nine percent less than similarly employed men;
 - female nurses earned more than 12% less than their male colleagues; and
 - female psychologists earned over 17% less than male psychologists.
- In 1999:
 - The median income of a female high school graduate was more than 41% less than that of her male counterpart;
 - the median income of a woman with a bachelor’s degree was over 35% (or \$16,689) less than that of a similarly qualified man;
 - a woman with a master’s degree earned 30% (or \$17,288) less than a man with a master’s degree;
 - the median annual income of a woman with a professional degree was 47% (or \$40,597) less than that of her male counterpart.
- Because women are paid less when they work, they receive smaller pensions (and Social Security checks) when they retire. In 2000, half of all older women received a private pension of less than \$4,164 per year, compared with \$7,768 for older men.

Women’s Economic Responsibilities

The proportion of families in which the husband, but not the wife, worked outside the home declined from 66% in the 1940s and ’50s to only 19% in 2000.

- The overall labor force participation rate of mothers with children under 18 was 72.3% in 2000.
- Whereas in 1970, 12% of all children lived in one parent families, in 2000 almost 27% lived with only one parent. Most of these children lived with their mothers.
- In 1960, women were the head of the household in less than 10% of all families; in 2000, the figure was almost 27%.
- More than 35% of families where children under 18 lived with their mother (with no father present) were below the poverty level in 2000. By contrast, married couple families had the lowest poverty rate (7.0%).

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.
- Women were expected to earn more than 45% of the first professional degrees conferred in 2001, up from 2.6% in 1961.
- Women were expected to earn more than 42% of all doctoral degrees in 2001, while in 1961 they earned only 10.5% of all doctoral degrees.
- The proportion of women in law school increased from 3.7% in 1963 to 47.6% in academic year 1999–2000. In the year 2000, more women than men entered law school.
- The proportion of women in medical school increased from 5.8% in academic year 1960–61 to 45.7% in academic year 2001–2002.
- Between academic years 1959–60 and 1999–2000, the percentage of degrees in dentistry earned by women increased from 0.8% to more than 40%.

Women and Unions

In 2001, almost 42% of all union members were women. Women are forming and joining unions at a faster rate than men.

- In 2001, union women earned weekly wages that were over 23% more than women who were not union members, while union men earned 15.5% more than nonunion men.

- The differences are even more marked for Black and Hispanic women:
 - The median weekly earnings of Black union women were about 25% more than their nonunion counterparts;
 - Hispanic women who were union members had median weekly earnings that were almost 32% higher than their nonunion counterparts.

For more information on professional women, see DPE's publication, "Salaried and Professional Women: Relevant Statistics" and check out our Website: www.dpeaflcio.org

The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE) comprises 22 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; 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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