

# ISSUES in Labor Statistics



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## What Women Earned in 1998

Women who work full time, regardless of age, race, or educational attainment, earn less, on average, than men. Overall, in 1998, median weekly earnings of female full-time wage and salary workers were \$456 compared to \$598 for men.

Twenty years earlier the pay differential was even greater, however. In 1979, women who were full-time wage and salary workers had earnings that were only about three-fifths those of men. By 1998, however, women's earnings were approximately three-quarters those of men.

For some demographic groups, the gender differences in earnings were quite small; for others they were relatively large. Black and Hispanic women, for example, had earnings that were around 85 percent those of their male counterparts; among whites, the ratio was about 76 percent. Young women and men (those under age 25) had fairly similar earnings (young women's earnings were about 91 percent those of men's). In contrast, women's earnings were much lower than men's in older age groups.<sup>1</sup>

This report presents the highlights of pay differences between female and male full- and part-time workers and those paid by the hour in 1998.

### Full-time workers

**Age.** The difference between women's and men's earnings is relatively large among older workers. For full-time wage and salary work-

ers ages 45 to 54, women's median earnings were 70.5 percent of men's; for 55- to 64-year-olds, the earnings ratio was 68.2 percent. In contrast, among workers 20 to 24 years old, women's earnings were 89.4 percent those of men. The earnings ratio for teenagers (16 to 19 years) was 88.5 percent.

Women in the 45- to 54-year age group earned the most (\$516), followed by 35- to 44-year-olds (\$498). Men's earnings also peaked among 45- to 54-year-olds at \$732.

**Race.** White workers of either gender earned more than their black or Hispanic counterparts. The differences among women, however, were much smaller than among men. White women's earnings (\$468) were 17 percent higher than black women's (\$400), and almost 39 percent higher than those for Hispanic women (\$337). In contrast, white men's earnings (\$615) were 31.4 percent higher than the earnings of their black counterparts (\$468) and 57.7 percent more than those of Hispanic men (\$390). Since 1979, inflation-adjusted earnings for white women have increased almost 16 percent, while black women's real earnings increased 7.5 percent.

**Earnings and education.** Median weekly earnings for female college graduates age 25 and over (\$707) were two-and-a-half times

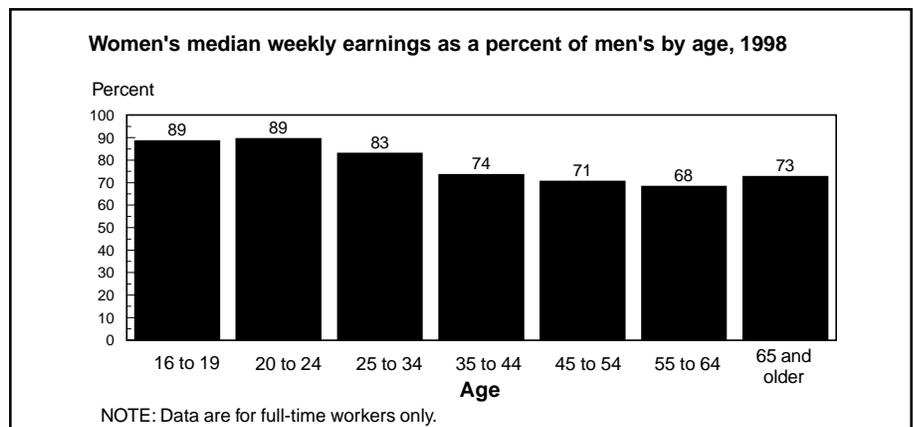
those for women without a high school diploma (\$283).

Female college graduates have fared better with regard to earnings growth than their male counterparts. Earnings for women with college degrees have increased 21.7 percent since 1979 on an inflation-adjusted basis. Real earnings of male college graduates increased less than 8 percent over the same time period. As a result, the female-to-male earnings ratio of college graduates rose from 66.6 percent in 1979 to 75.3 percent in 1998.

**Occupation.** Women working full-time in professional specialty occupations earned \$682 in 1998, more than women employed in any other major occupation category.

In 1998, 46 percent of full-time workers in the relatively high paying executive, administrative, and managerial occupations were women. This was up from 34 percent in 1983, the first year for which comparable data are available. Despite changes in occupational employment for women, they still tend to work in very different jobs than men. For example, in 1998 men were about nine times as likely as women to be employed in precision production, craft, and repair occupations (where earnings are somewhat above the median), while women were four times as likely to work in administrative support occupations (where pay is typically low).

<sup>1</sup> Earnings data in this report are from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a national monthly survey of approximately 50,000 households conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The earnings data are collected from one-fourth of the CPS monthly sample. For a detailed description of the source of the data and an explanation of the concepts and definitions used, please see the Technical Note included at the end of the BLS periodical, *Employment and Earnings*.



### Part-time workers

Women who worked part time—that is, less than 35 hours per week—represented 25.8 percent of all female wage and salary workers in 1998. In contrast, 10.7 percent of men in wage and salary jobs worked part-time.

Female part-time workers' median weekly earnings were \$161, approximately 35 percent of the median for women who worked full time. At \$146, earnings for male part-time workers were about 9 percent lower than female part-timer's earnings. This was because more than half the male part-time workers were under 25 years old—ages where earnings tend to be low—compared to less than a third of the female part timers.

### Workers paid by the hour

Women who worked at jobs in which they were paid by the hour had median hourly earnings of \$8.24 in 1998. About 64 percent of women employed in wage and salary jobs were paid on an hourly basis.

In 1998, about 8 percent of women who were paid hourly rates had earnings at or below the prevailing Federal minimum wage

of \$5.15. This compares to approximately 5 percent of men paid by the hour.

**Age.** Among women paid hourly rates, the proportion earning the minimum wage or less varies considerably by age. Teenagers were the most likely to have earnings at or below the minimum, while those 45 to 54 years old were the least likely.

### Additional Information

For more information about the data presented in this report, contact Mary Bowler in the Division of Labor Force Statistics at (202) 606-6378, or by E-mail at [Bowler\\_M@bls.gov](mailto:Bowler_M@bls.gov). *Highlights of Women's Earnings in 1998* (BLS Report 928, April 1999), provides more extensive tabular material. This report is available on the BLS Internet site,

<http://stats.bls.gov/cps/cpswom98.pdf>.

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### Women's and men's median weekly earnings by selected characteristics, 1998

Characteristic	Women	Men
<b>Age</b>		
Total, 16 years and over .....	\$456	\$598
16 to 19 .....	249	281
20 to 24 .....	319	357
25 to 34 .....	451	544
35 to 44 .....	498	677
45 to 54 .....	516	732
55 to 64 .....	476	699
65 and older .....	350	482
<b>Race and Hispanic origin</b>		
White .....	468	615
Black .....	400	468
Hispanic origin .....	337	390
<b>Educational attainment</b>		
Less than a high school diploma .....	283	383
High school graduates, no college .....	396	559
Some college or associate degree .....	476	643
College graduates, total .....	707	939

NOTE: Earnings data are 1998 median annual averages for full-time wage and salary workers. Educational attainment data are for persons 25 years and older.

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