

# Wisconsin's Gender Wage Gap

Women earned

80¢

for every \$1.00 earned by men

In 2017 (the most recent year for which U.S. Census Bureau data are available), **women in Wisconsin working full-time, year-round, earned 80 cents for every dollar earned by men**, compared to 78 cents in 2016 and 81 cents for women nationally. The gap, while significant, is smaller than in 2009 when women earned 75 cents for every dollar and **71 cents in 2004**.

**Wisconsin ranks 3rd highest in the nation for the share of women in the labor force**—66% of adult women work—behind only Minnesota and the District of Columbia. Women make up nearly half of Wisconsin's workforce and nearly **one-third of all households are headed by women**. In 2017, Wisconsin women working full-time, year-round had median annual earnings of \$41,000 compared to \$51,400 for men—**over \$10,000 less per year** (on average) for women working full-time, year-round. That wage gap widens considerably for women from racial and ethnic minority groups.<sup>1</sup>

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**In the over half century since Congress passed the Equal Pay Act of 1963, women have made enormous strides in the workplace and occupational fields once the domain of men. Nonetheless, a gender pay gap continues to elude Wisconsin's women regardless of occupation or educational attainment.**

For workers with post-secondary degrees, it is suggested that the **wage gap starts with the college major**. A study by Glassdoor finds that “[o]f the 10 college majors that lead to the highest-paying jobs in the first five years after graduation, nine were dominated by men...six engineering degrees, plus information technology, management information systems, statistics, and the lone women-dominated degree, nursing. Of the 10 lowest-paying college majors, six were dominated by women...healthcare administration, social work, education, liberal arts, psychology, and biology.”<sup>2</sup>

## What is the “Gender Wage Gap”?

The **Gender Wage Gap** measures the difference between total women's and men's wages. The difference is described in terms of cents on the dollar—e.g., women earned \$0.80 cents for every \$1.00 earned by men. This 20-cent difference is calculated comparing the total median (average) annual earnings of women and men, across all occupations, working full-time (35+ hours/week) and year-round (50+ weeks/year).

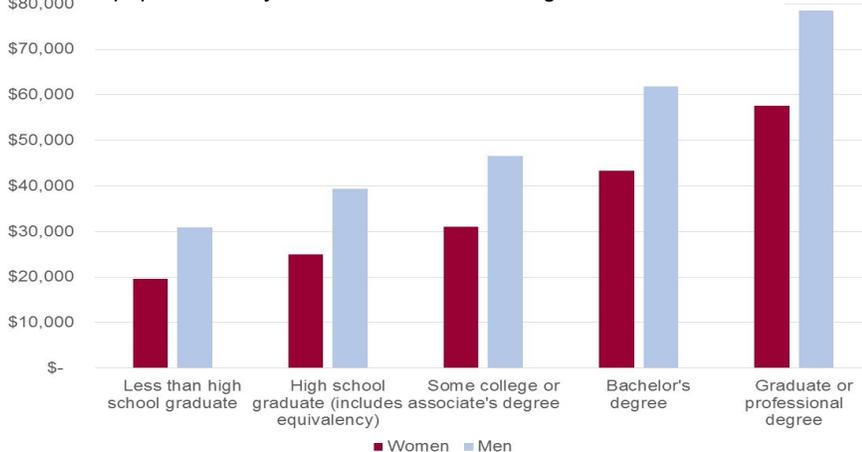
The gender pay gap can be measured in three ways: by hourly, weekly or annual earnings. We used median (average) annual earnings, published by Census.<sup>5</sup>

The wage gap calculation does not measure differences among workers such as education, skills, labor force attachment, or actual hours worked. Because the wage gap calculation is an aggregate of all workers across all occupations, it does not measure equal work for equal pay or wage discrimination.

### Wage Discrimination Against Women is Illegal!

To learn more, visit, <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/er/> or contact the DWD Equal Rights Division at 608-266-6860 or 414-227-4384

Median Earnings by Sex by Educational Attainment for the population 25 years and over with earnings, Wisconsin, 2017



### About the Women's Council

Wisconsin Women's Council promotes initiatives to empower women, conducts research on the status of women, and engages in unique partnerships to address barriers and inequalities affecting Wisconsin women. The Council is comprised of 15 members appointed by the Governor and Legislative leaders.

Mary Jo Baas, Chair

Christine Lidbury Executive Director     Tayler Palkowski Research Assistant



## The wage gap reflects that women and men typically cluster in different types of jobs.

The wage gap reflects the different types of jobs women and men typically hold. This is often called **occupational segregation**. It is also true, however, that, on average, **women earned less than men in each of the 24 occupations reported by the Census Bureau** for full-time, year-round civilian workers (see table). This persists whether they work in occupations dominated by women or men.

This gives rise to debate over whether the wage gap can be explained by choices made by workers or if other factors, such as gender bias or cultural issues, are at play. Some researchers dispute the idea of bias as a feature of the wage gap, reporting that the wage gap is the result of life choices by women, such as choosing family-friendly jobs over those that may pay better but have less flexibility. Proponents argue that such choices are not “free” but constrained by social and cultural factors around women, work and family. Research can be found explaining both arguments.<sup>3</sup>

**HIGHLIGHT: Where Women Work**

**Office & Administrative Support** is the most common occupation for Wisconsin women, employing about 280,000 (1 out of 5) women working full-time, year-round. With 2017 median annual earnings of \$36,500, the gender wage gap has widened slightly to 85 cents, down from 87 cents in 2010, for every dollar earned by men.

In the female-dominated **Education** sector, women continued to earn less than men, with no change in the wage gap in this decade—still at 80 cents for every dollar earned by men.

**REFERENCES**

Footnotes: <sup>1</sup>IWPR, “The Gender Wage Gap: 2017; Earnings Differences by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity, September 13, 2018, <https://iwpr.org/publications/gender-wage-gap-2017>. <sup>2</sup>Emma Hinchliffe, “The gender pay gap starts with your college major,” April 2017, Mashable <https://mashable.com/2017/04/19/college-major-gender-pay-gap-glassdoor/#xrWtRuDZeSq4>. <sup>3</sup>See for example, US Dept. of Labor, “An Analysis of the Reasons for the Disparity in Wages Between Men and Women,” 2009; US Dept. of Labor, *Myth Busting the Pay Gap*, [social.dol.gov/blog/myth-busting-the-pay-gap](http://social.dol.gov/blog/myth-busting-the-pay-gap); AAUW, *The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap*, 2014; <sup>4</sup>U.S. Census Bureau, [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

Data Sources: Women’s Council unpublished calculations based on 2018 Current Population Survey, Adult Civilian Persons; US Census Bureau: 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, S2412: Occupation by sex and median earnings in the past 12 months (in 2017 inflation-adjusted dollars) for the full-time, year-round civilian employed population 16 years and over; B20004, Median earnings in the past 12 months (in 2017 inflation-adjusted dollars) by sex by educational attainment for the population 25 years and over; S2401: Occupation by sex for the civilian employed population 16 years and over; 2010 American Community Survey, B24022, sex by occupation and median earnings in the past 12 months (in 2010 inflation adjusted dollars) for the full-time, year-round civilian employed population 16 years and over.

**Gender Wage Gap by Occupational Category: What Has Changed** Since 2010, the **gender wage gap narrowed for nine of 24 occupations** reported below (see table), including a number of health and caregiving occupations. Notably, however, the **gap is unchanged or wider in several key science and technology-related fields** such as computer, math, engineering and manufacturing occupations. Indeed, the **gap widened in 12 occupations**.

Women in the Workforce and the Gender Wage Gap by Occupation, Wisconsin, 2017 and 2010 (full-time, year-round civilian workers)					
	Percent of workers in each occupation that are women (2017)	Women’s Median Wage (2017)	Cents on the dollar earned by women compared to men		
			2017	Change in earnings since 2010	2010
<b>Management, business, &amp; financial occupations:</b>					
Management	39.9%	\$61,500	\$ 0.79	🟢	\$ 0.73
Business & financial operations*	57.9%	\$51,900	\$ 0.78	🟢	\$ 0.71
<b>Computer, engineering, &amp; science occupations:</b>					
Computer & mathematical	26.5%	\$62,000	\$ 0.84	🟡🟡	\$ 0.85
Architecture & engineering	12.0%	\$60,900	\$ 0.81	🔴	\$ 0.92
Life, physical, & social science	48.9%	\$57,400	\$ 0.98	🟢	\$ 0.78
<b>Education, legal, community service, arts, &amp; media occupations:</b>					
Community & social service*	68.9%	\$45,100	\$ 0.89	🔴	\$ 0.93
Legal*	51.9%	\$56,200	\$ 0.56	🟢	\$ 0.46
Education, training, & library*	72.3%	\$45,600	\$ 0.80	🟡🟡	\$ 0.80
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, & media*	51.0%	\$46,300	\$ 0.92	🟢	\$ 0.78
<b>Healthcare practitioners &amp; technical occupations:</b>					
Health diagnosing & treating practitioners & other technical*	77.9%	\$67,500	\$ 0.56	🟢	\$ 0.46
Health technologists & technicians*	84.1%	\$41,200	\$ 0.86	🔴	\$ 0.88
<b>Service occupations:</b>					
Healthcare support*	91.3%	\$30,300	\$ 0.94	🟢	\$ 0.87
Protective service	22.9%	\$51,100	\$ 0.83	🔴	\$ 0.92
Food preparation & serving related*	58.2%	\$22,600	\$ 0.87	🔴	\$ 0.98
Building & grounds cleaning & maintenance	37.2%	\$25,500	\$ 0.67	🔴	\$ 0.71
Personal care & service*	80.4%	\$24,300	\$ 0.85	🟢	\$ 0.80
<b>Sales &amp; office occupations:</b>					
Sales & related	48.9%	\$36,500	\$ 0.69	🟢	\$ 0.65
Office & administrative support*	73.6%	\$36,500	\$ 0.85	🔴	\$ 0.87
<b>Natural resources, construction, &amp; maintenance occupations:</b>					
Farming, fishing, & forestry	22.5%	\$26,400	\$ 0.77	🔴	\$ 0.83
Construction & extraction	3.2%	\$41,600	\$ 0.83	🔴	\$ 0.98
Installation, maintenance & repair	4.0%	\$40,300	\$ 0.82	🔴	\$ 0.94
<b>Production, transportation, &amp; material moving occupations:</b>					
Production (incl. manufacturing)	27.5%	\$31,200	\$ 0.74	🟡🟡	\$ 0.74
Transportation	11.5%	\$32,200	\$ 0.69	🔴	\$ 0.78
Material moving	22.1%	\$27,400	\$ 0.76	🔴	\$ 0.83

Note: \*Occupational categories where women make up half or more of all workers.