



Source: Daily Labor Report: News Archive > 2010 > August > 08/25/2010 > News > Women: Despite 25 Years of Gains, Women Face 'Stubborn' Pay Gap, JEC Says

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## **Women**

### **Despite 25 Years of Gains, Women Face 'Stubborn' Pay Gap, JEC Says**

Congress's Joint Economic Committee Aug. 25 released a report on economic advances by women over the past quarter century, finding that they have become critical contributors to the workforce and family income but still face a stubborn pay gap.

"Women work more, earn more, and are more educated than they were 25 years ago," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.), chairman of the JEC. "But, women still earn less than men," she added, noting that women gained the right to vote nationwide 90 years ago, in August 1920.

In 2009, 49.8 percent of all workers, employed full time and part time, were women, up from about 44.0 percent in 1984, according to the study, which was based on Labor Department figures.

The parity in payroll employment between men and women likely resulted from the disparate impacts of the recession that began in December 2007 on employment in industries, the report said. Construction and manufacturing, which employ men in greater concentrations than women, were hard hit by the downturn and had heavier job losses than other industries.

Similarly, women accounted for 45 percent of all union members in 2008, the most recent year for which figures are available, up from 34 percent in 1984. "The growing importance of women in the labor movement is likely due to the expansion of female-concentrated sectors such as health care, education, and the service sector combined with the contraction of male-concentrated sectors such as manufacturing," the report said.

Although the gender pay gap has shrunk, women who work full time still earn just 80 percent of what their male counterparts do on average, up from 68 percent 25 years ago.

Also, certain industries, such as manufacturing and construction, "remain heavily gender-segregated," JEC said.

Other measures that show the development of women's contributions include the following:

- The share of women in the labor force, either working or seeking a job, rose from 53.6 percent in 1984 to 59.2 percent in 2009, with most of the growth occurring prior to 2000, while men's labor force participation rate declined from 76.4 percent in 1984 to 72.0 percent over the same period.
- The number of working women has grown by about 44 percent, while male employment has risen by 25 percent.
- Among mothers, labor force participation rates have increased both for those with children under the age of 6 (from 52 percent to 64 percent) and for mothers with children ages 6 to 17 (from 68 percent to 78 percent).
- The number of industries in which women make up half or more of the workforce grew from three in 1984 (government, education and health services, and financial activities) to five in 2009 (previous industries plus leisure and hospitality and personal care and other services).
- Women's gains in educational attainment have edged out those of men, as 87 percent of women had at least four years of high school or more education in 2009, up from 73 percent in 1984, compared with 86 percent of men, up from 74 percent.
- The share of family income accounted for by wives' incomes rose from 29 percent in 1983 to 36 percent in 2008.
- The income of married couples with a working wife grew by an average 1.1 percent per year from 1983 to 2008, while that of married couples with a stay-at-home wife declined by 0.2 percent per year on average.

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*The JEC report may be accessed at <http://op.bna.com/dlrcases.nsf/r?Open=lswr-88nlmb>.*

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ISSN 1522-5968

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