

Middle School Lesson

Pink Collar Jobs: Gender Segregation and Pay Inequality in the Workplace

Rationale

This lesson increases student awareness about the issues of gender segregation in the workplace and pay inequity, problems that persist but are often masked by progress in the women's rights movement over the past decades. Through political cartoons and analysis of current statistics, students learn about workplace realities for today's average woman. Students then plan social action projects that address pay inequality.

Objectives

- Students will explore perspectives on women's opportunities in the workplace.
- Students will analyze and organize data about women in the workplace.
- Students will learn about gender segregation in the workplace and the gender wage gap.
- Students will identify and implement actions for addressing pay inequality.

Age Range

Grades 6–8

Time

90 minutes or 2 class periods (plus time to implement projects)

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Business Executive Cartoon](#) (one copy if projecting; one copy per student if distributing)
- [Corporate Ladder Cartoon](#) (one copy if projecting; one copy per student if distributing)
- [Gender Differences: Education, Jobs and Wages](#) (one copy of each of the five related handouts for each member of one small group)
- [Equal Pay Day: Top 10 Ideas for Action](#) (one copy)

Other Material:

- Chart paper, markers, graph paper, rulers
- (Optional) Computer, LCD projector

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- (Optional) Prepare [Business Executive and Corporate Ladder](#) Cartoons to be project for viewing by entire class.

Techniques and Skills

analyzing charts, analyzing visual media, brainstorming, collecting and analyzing data, cooperative group work, creating graphs, critical thinking, forming opinions, large and small group discussion, social action

Key Words

Corporate ladder
Executive
Gender
Inequity
In the red
Median
Pay equity
Petition
Pledge
Segregation
Stereotypical
Wage gap

Procedures

Part I: Exploring Cartoons about Women in the Workplace (10–15 minutes)

1. Project or distribute copies of the following cartoons (one at a time) and engage students in a brief discussion about each using the questions below.

Business Executive

- Who is the woman behind the desk? What is her position?
- What does her husband do?
- Why is the cartoon considered humorous?
- How have women's roles in the workplace (and men's roles at home) changed over time?
- What is the cartoonist saying about women's opportunities in the workplace today?

Corporate Ladder

- What is the purpose or function of a ladder? What do you think is meant by the expression "corporate ladder"?
 - Why are there two different sized ladders for men and women?
 - What do you think the woman is thinking and feeling as she looks at the different ladders? How do you know?
 - What is the cartoonist trying to say about opportunities for women in the workplace?
2. Ask students how the message or viewpoint of each cartoon is different. Ask them which cartoon they think most reflects the reality for women today.

NOTE: Encourage students to base their answers on the situations of women they actually know or on what they have learned from the media. Let students know that they do not have to align themselves with one position, that they may see some validity in both viewpoints.

Part II: Analyzing Data about Women in the Workplace (45 minutes)

1. Tell students that they will be exploring data that will help them to form a more objective understanding of career opportunities for women in today's world. Divide the class into five groups. Ask each group to select a recorder and a reporter. Assign each group one of the following topics:
 - Education
 - "Women's Work"
 - "Men's Work"
 - Women Doing "Men's Work"
 - The Wage Gap
2. Distribute a copy of the appropriate [Gender Differences: Education, Jobs and Wages](#) handout to each group. Make graph paper, markers, rulers and other supplies needed for creating graphs available.
3. Instruct groups to complete the following two tasks:
 - a. Review and briefly discuss the assigned handout, making sure that all group members have a common understanding of the data.

NOTE: Several of the handouts include "median" salaries. Be sure that students understand the difference between "median" and "average." The data from the handouts are taken from Bureau of Labor Statistics "[Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey](#)" which is updated yearly.

- b. Create a graph that conveys the key information or ideas on the handout. Any type of graph is acceptable, and it is not necessary to include all data from the handout. (For example, the group looking at the wage gap chart listing 20 occupations may select only five representative occupations to depict on their graph.) If computers or tablets are available, students can also create graphs electronically.

4. Reconvene the class and have each group post its graph in the sequence listed above in Part II #1. Ask the group reporters, one at a time, to summarize the key data and themes in the graph created by their group. After all five summaries have been presented, engage students in a discussion using some or all of the following questions:
- Did this data back up what you already thought about women’s roles in the workplace or were you surprised by what you learned? What surprised you?
 - Why do you think there is still a high degree of gender segregation in so many occupations?
 - Why do you think women still earn less on average than men? Do you think this is fair?
 - What value do you think our society places on “women’s work” as compared to “men’s work”? What do you think about this?
 - What do you think can be done to create more equity in the workplace for women?

NOTE: Make sure that students understand the following key points as a result of the data analysis and discussion. If necessary, summarize these points before moving on.

- Women on average have as much or more education than men, and younger generations of women are currently surpassing men in college graduates rates.
 - While there has been much progress for women in the workplace over the last 30–40 years, there is still a high degree of gender segregation in the work world and, in general, “women’s work” is less valued and pays less than “men’s work.”
 - Women who work in traditionally male fields earn more on average than women in traditionally female fields.
 - The average woman, however, still earns less than her male counterpart in the same job, and this gap is even wider for African American and Latina women.
 - Pay inequity is not just a women’s issue. Whole families are impacted when some of the wage earners in a household are underpaid. In addition, research indicates that the salaries for both men and women are less when they supervise, work with or are supervised by females.
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Part III: Take Action by Planning an Equal Pay Day (30 minutes plus time to implement projects)

1. Ask students if there is anything that community members—like themselves—can do if they believe that wage inequity is wrong and discriminatory. List their ideas on the board/smart board.
2. Tell students that an organization called the National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) created Equal Pay Day in 1996 to create awareness about the gap between men’s and women’s wages. Share the following:

Equal Pay Day is held each April to symbolize how far into the year a woman must work, on average, to earn as much as a man earned the previous year. It is held on the day in April that aligns with how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year. To match men’s earnings for 2017, for example, women will have to work from January 2016 to April 4, 2017 an extra four months plus a few days. The day is held on a Tuesday, which is the day on which women’s wages catch up to men’s wages from the previous week. In other words, while the average male works five days per week for twelve months, the average female has to work seven days per week for sixteen months to earn equal pay.
3. Suggest that students can organize an Equal Pay Day (in April or any time of the year) in their school or community and implement one or more of the ideas they generated above in Part III #1. Have students get back into small groups and ask each small group to identify one action that they want to take. If necessary, supplement their ideas with the suggestions on the handout, [Equal Pay Day: Top 10 Ideas for Action](#).
4. Provide time in class to help students organize and implement their actions. Consult the following organizations for further information and resources:
 - [9to5, National Association of Working Women](#)
 - [AFL-CIO](#)
 - [American Association of University Women](#)
 - [National Committee on Pay Equity](#)

- [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#)
- [National Organization of Women](#)
- [National Women's Law Center](#)

Business Executive Cartoon



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Corporate Ladder Cartoon



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Gender Differences: Education, Jobs and Wages

Topic: Education

COLLEGE TRENDS

HISTORICALLY

In the U.S., among the population aged 25 and older, a higher percentage of men have attained a bachelor's degree or higher compared to women.

The gap has narrowed since the 1970s, due largely to women's progress in education and workforce participation and to men's wages rising at a slower rate.



2014

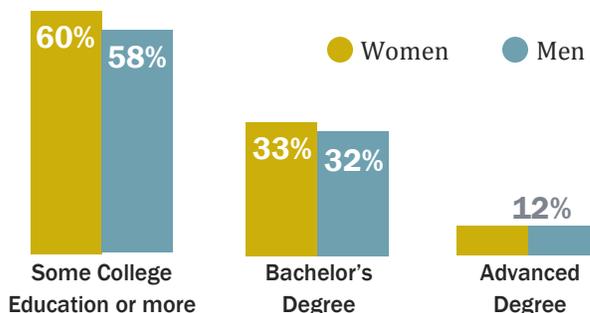
The **first year**, among ages 25 and older, the percentage of women's college attainment (30.2%) was statistically higher than that of men (29.9%).

1980-2015

Median weekly earnings for men have been substantially more than women at each level of educational attainment.

Ryan 2015, Ryan 2016 and Women's Bureau

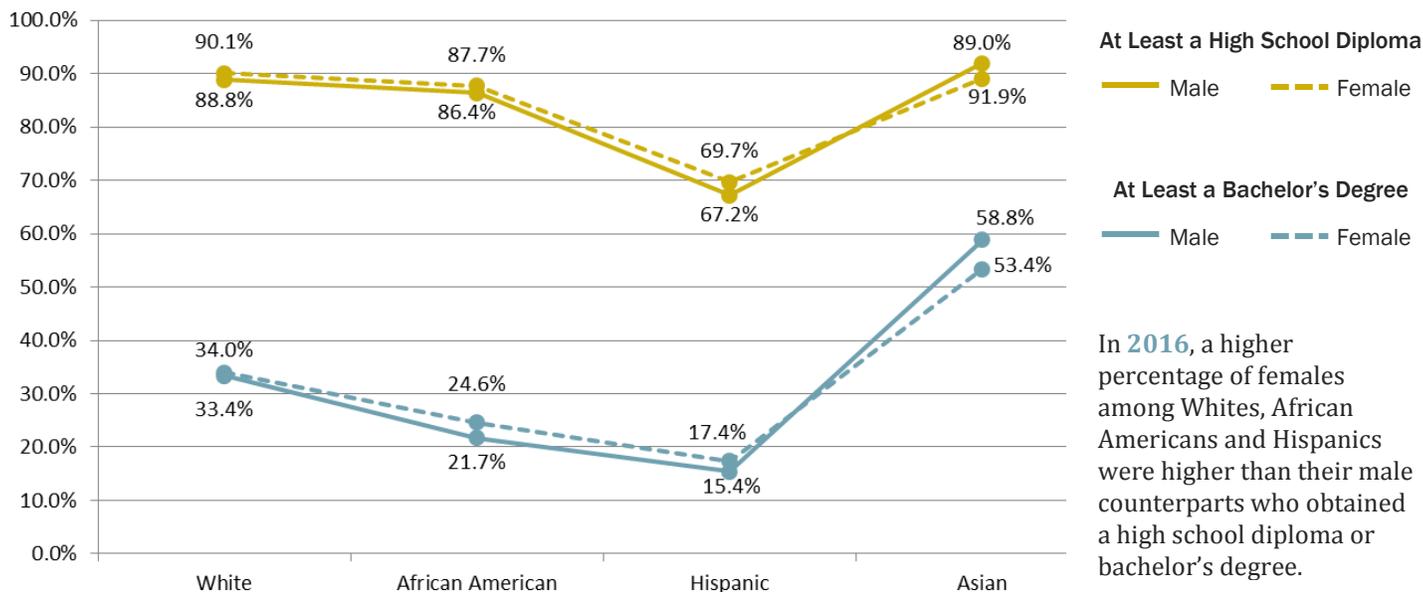
BY DEGREES



In **2015**, among the population aged 25 and older, a higher percentage of women had completed at least some college or more compared to men.

Ryan 2015, Ryan 2016 and Women's Bureau

BY RACE/ETHNICITY



In **2016**, a higher percentage of females among Whites, African Americans and Hispanics were higher than their male counterparts who obtained a high school diploma or bachelor's degree.

Census Bureau 2017

Sources:

Ryan, C.L., and K. Bauman. 2015. Women Now at the Head of the Class, Lead Men in College Attainment. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2015/10/women-now-at-the-head-of-the-class-lead-men-in-college-attainment.html>.

Ryan, C.L., and K. Bauman. 2016. Educational Attainment in the United States: 2015. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p20-578.pdf.

Census Bureau. 2017. Educational Attainment in the United States: 2016. Current Population Survey, Table A-2. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2016/demo/education-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html>.

Women's Bureau. Women's Earnings and the Wage Gap Issue Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor. [www.dol.gov/wb/resources/Womens Earnings and the Wage Gap 17.pdf](http://www.dol.gov/wb/resources/Womens_Earnings_and_the_Wage_Gap_17.pdf).

Gender Differences: Education, Jobs and Wages

Topic: “Women’s Work”

Female workers remain for the most part in jobs considered “women’s work.” For example, women make up about 97.7% of all preschool and kindergarten teachers and about 88.6% of all nurses. Only a small number of working women are in jobs considered “men’s work,” such as plumbers or fire fighters.

Occupations with a High Concentration of Women in 2016				
Occupation	% Women	Median* Weekly Salary	% Men	Median* Weekly Salary
Preschool and kindergarten teachers	97.7	\$621	2.5	-
Childcare workers	94.1	\$451	5.9	-
Secretaries and administrative assistants	94.0	\$708	6.0	\$831
Hairdressers, hairstylists and cosmetologists	91.5	\$500	8.8	-
Teacher assistants	90.5	\$525	9.5	\$501
Billing and posting clerks	89.1	\$660	10.9	-
Registered Nurses	88.6	\$1,143	11.4	\$1,261
Nursing, psychiatric and home health aids	86.0	\$498	14.0	\$534
Bookkeeping, accounting and auditing clerks	84.8	\$716	15.2	\$790
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	84.6	\$427	15.4	\$497
Social workers	81.4	\$884	18.6	\$1,039
Elementary and middle school teachers	78.7	\$981	21.3	\$1,126
Medical and health services managers	75.0	\$1,254	25.0	\$1,610

**Median means the middle number when a series of numbers are arranged in order. A dash indicates no data or data that meet publication criteria (values were less than \$50,000 annually).*

Sources:

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017. Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by detailed occupation and sex. Washington: U.S. Department of Labor. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm>.

Gender Differences: Education, Jobs and Wages

Topic: “Men’s Work”

Stereotypical “women’s work” usually pays less than “men’s work.” For example, women’s *median* weekly wage (salary) for a child care worker (considered a “female job”) was \$451 in 2016, while the women’s *median* weekly wage for a truck driver (considered a “male job”) was \$630.

Occupations with a Low Concentration of Women in 2016				
Occupation	% Women	Median* Weekly Salary	% Men	Median* Weekly Salary
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	1.6	-	98.4	\$729
Railroad conductors and yardmasters	1.9	-	98.1	\$1,148
Pipelayers, Plumbers, pipefitters and steamfitters	2.3	-	97.7	\$925
Electricians	2.7	-	97.3	\$951
Firefighters	3.2	-	96.8	\$1,056
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	4.3	\$630	95.7	\$787
Aircraft pilots and flight engineers	5.9	-	94.1	\$1,600
Police and sheriff’s patrol officers	14.1	\$938	85.9	\$1,008
Clergy (priests, rabbis, ministers, etc.)	14.4	\$893	85.6	\$1,070
Software developers, applications and systems software	19.7	\$1,553	80.2	\$1,863
Computer and mathematical	25.2	\$1,325	74.8	\$1,518
Production	25.9	\$527	74.1	\$723
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing	26.9	\$872	73.1	\$1,140
Chief executives	27.7	\$1,876	72.3	\$2,419
Stock clerks and order fillers	36.6	\$526	63.4	\$533

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Gender Differences: Education, Jobs and Wages

Topic: Women Doing “Men’s Work”

Women who do “men’s work” earn on average 20–30% more than women who do “women’s work.” For example, a woman working in the field of installation, maintenance or repair will earn a median weekly income of \$781 while a woman working in healthcare support (e.g., medical and dental assistants, nursing aides, massage therapists) will earn \$519.

Occupation (“Men’s Work”)	% Women	Median* Weekly Salary	% Men	Median* Weekly Salary
Installation, maintenance and repair occupations	3.4	\$781	96.6	\$863
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	4.3	\$630	95.7	\$787
Architecture and Engineering	14.0	\$1,207	86.0	\$1,529
Police and sheriff’s patrol officers	14.1	\$938	85.9	\$1,008
Clergy (priests, rabbis, ministers, etc.)	14.4	\$893	85.6	\$1,070
Software developers, applications and systems software	19.7	\$1,553	80.2	\$1,863
Chief executives	27.7	\$1,876	72.3	\$2,419
Occupation (“Women’s Work”)	% Women	Median* Weekly Salary	% Men	Median* Weekly Salary
Childcare workers	94.1	\$451	5.9	–
Teacher assistants	90.5	\$525	9.5	\$501
Healthcare Support	86.4	\$519	13.6	\$602
Personal care aides	83.5	\$469	16.4	\$514
Medical and health services managers	75.0	\$1,254	25.0	\$1,610
Personal Care and Service occupations	73.4	\$482	26.6	\$613
Office and Administrative Support	71.5	\$669	28.5	\$708

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Sources:

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017. Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by detailed occupation and sex. Washington: U.S. Department of Labor. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm>.

Gender Differences: Education, Jobs and Wages

Topic: The Wage Gap

In 2016, women in the U.S. were paid only 80¢ for every dollar a man was paid. Asian American women in the U.S. earned 87¢, African American women earned 63¢ and Latinas earned 54¢ for every dollar that men earned.

According to these percentages, the estimated loss of annual salary is \$7,310 for Asian women, \$21,698 for African American women and \$26,403 for Latinas.

The Gap* between Median** Weekly Salaries for Men and Women in 2016

Occupation	Median* Salary for Men	Median* Salary for Women	Difference	Wage Gap**
Bartenders	\$701	\$498	\$203	71.0%
Cashiers	\$475	\$403	\$72	84.9%
Janitors and Building Cleaners	\$564	\$476	\$88	84.4%
Computer Programmers	\$1,466	\$1,312	\$154	89.5%
Bus drivers	691	\$589	\$102	85.2%
Cooks	\$459	\$421	\$38	91.7%
Designers	\$1,267	\$922	\$345	72.8%
Physicians and Surgeons	\$2,343	\$1,476	\$867	63.0%
Elementary and Middle School Teachers	\$1,126	\$981	\$145	87.1%
Architects and Engineers	\$1,529	\$1,207	\$322	78.9%
Laundry and Dry-Cleaning Workers	\$486	\$436	\$50	89.7%
Lawyers	\$2,086	\$1,619	\$467	77.6%
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	\$497	\$427	\$70	85.9%
Postal Service Mail Carriers	\$1,020	\$931	\$89	91.3%
Registered Nurses	\$1,261	\$1,143	\$118	90.6%
Bailiffs, Correctional Officers and Jailers	\$793	\$672	\$121	84.7%
Food Service Managers	\$853	\$632	\$221	74.1%
Sales Representatives, services, all other	\$1,202	\$826	\$376	68.7%
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	\$831	\$708	\$123	85.2%
Waiters and Waitresses	\$504	\$441	\$63	87.5%

*Median means the middle number when a series of numbers are arranged in order.

**A gap of 70% means, for example, that women earn 70¢ for every \$1.00 that men earn.

Sources:

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017. Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by detailed occupation and sex. Washington: U.S. Department of Labor. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm>.

National Women's Law Center. 2017. The Wage Gap: The Who, How, Why, and What To Do. Fact Sheet. <https://nwlc.org/resources/the-wage-gap-the-who-how-why-and-what-to-do/>.

Equal Pay Day: Top 10 Ideas for Action

1. Wear RED on Equal Pay Day to symbolize how far women (especially African-American and Latina women) are “in the red” (or losing money) with their pay.
2. Conduct a public information campaign to raise awareness about the wage gap.
3. Send letters to the editor of your local paper or blog about the issue of pay inequality.
4. Interview women in your community to learn more about how they are affected by the wage gap. Share their stories through your school or local newspaper/Web site.
5. Sponsor an essay contest in your school or community to raise awareness about pay inequality and publish the winning entries in your school or local newspaper/Web site.
6. Encourage your city council, mayor and/or governor to proclaim “Equal Pay Day” in your community, city and/or state.
7. Write letters to or schedule meetings with local and state legislators, and ask them to sign a Fair Pay Pledge ensuring pay equity practices in their own offices and support for local or state level pay equity legislation.
8. Write letters to or schedule meetings with members of Congress, and ask them to sign a Fair Pay Pledge ensuring pay equity practices in their own offices and support for federal pay equity legislation, such as the Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 766/H.R. 1338 and the Fair Pay Restoration Act (S. 1843).
9. Organize a petition to send to legislators that demonstrates support in your community for pay equity legislation.
10. Conduct a survey of local businesses and their employees to determine what benefits and policies are available to working women and their families. Publicize the results in your school or local newspaper or Web site.

Adapted with permission from American Association of University Women, Pay Equity Ideas for Action, <http://www.aauw.org> (accessed May 2008).