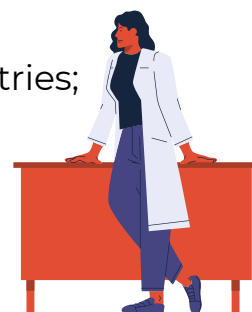


# Gender and Jobs - Women in the Workforce

## Goals

- Describe pay inequities between women and men in various industries;
- Read, interpret, and analyze data in a graph;
- Draw conclusions from data;
- Discuss ways to change pay inequity.



## Essential Questions

- Do stereotypical ideas about women contribute to women's work choices?
- Why do women still earn less than men in virtually every industry?
- **Enduring Understandings**
  - Stereotypical ideas about women may affect women's work choices, either consciously or subconsciously. Gender stereotyping can lead to workplace discrimination, including wage inequity, which may also influence women's work choices.
  - Women still earn less than men in virtually every industry because of gender stereotyping and wage discrimination, and the gap is bigger for Indigenous women.

## Materials

- [Women's Earnings and Employment by Industry](#) (2009)
- [The Gender Wage Gap in 2018](#) (2019)
- Copy of the vocabulary words below (one per student, or projected on a whiteboard)
- Paper for written assignment

## Vocabulary

**horizontal axis** (noun) The flat line on a graph, also called the x axis. It is perpendicular to the vertical axis. The horizontal axis is broken into units, and the two axes together are used to orient data points.

**inequity** (noun) something that is unfair

**median** (noun) The middle point. In a set of data, half the data points are lower than the median, while the other half are higher than the median. (Note: Median is not the same as average.)

**parity** (noun) Equality; in dealing with numerical data, parity refers to equality of amount.

**percent/percentage** (noun) One one-hundredth; often used interchangeably with percentage, which means one amount in proportion to another amount, measured in 100ths.

**vertical axis** The line that is perpendicular to the horizontal axis, also called the y axis. Like the horizontal axis, it is broken into units. The two axes are used to locate data points.

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## Suggested Procedure

1. Ask students: “What does inequity mean?” (something that is unfair) Then review the rest of the vocabulary words (above) with students. Explain that these words will help them understand the data they read in graphs and will help them communicate with others about that data: The terms horizontal axis and vertical axis refer to graphs themselves. The terms parity, median, and percent/percentage help describe the data that graphs show.

2. With a partner, have students examine the graph “Employment and median usual weekly earnings of women, by industry, 2009.” Ask them to point to the horizontal axis, and then point to the vertical axis. Have students read out loud the definition of the vertical axis. Using the definition of median, ask them to write a short explanation of what the vertical axis shows. Then have students read the definition of the horizontal axis, and using the definition of percent/percentage, write a short explanation of what the horizontal axis shows.

Next, read out loud the definition of the word parity. Ask: “When you read the title of the graph and what each axis shows, how do you think the word parity might be relevant to the information in the graph? Write your prediction.”

3. Have students work with partners to complete this pre-reading exercise: Explain that this graph presents a lot of information, but uses very few words to do so. Ask students:

- What does the title tell you about the topic of the graph?
- What does the horizontal axis show?
- What does the vertical axis show?

Have students write a sentence or two summarizing what your pre-reading suggested you might learn when you read the graph.

Explain that this graph is unusual in that it shows three variables. Tell students, “On the two axes, as you’ve seen, we see women’s earnings presented as a percentage of men’s earnings and the median (or middle) amount of money women earn weekly in different industries. The chart also shows a third factor: the occupations in which women are employed and, among those, which employ the largest number of women.” Then ask: “How does the graph show this third piece of information?”

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Ask students to try reading the data in the graph by focusing on construction. Ask the following questions:

- What does the size of the construction dot tell you about the number of women who work in construction compared to other industries?
- What does the graph say is the median weekly income of women who work in construction?
- What does it mean that construction is at the far right edge of the graph?

Then have partners compare their answers with another group to see if they are reading the graph correctly. If students are finding that their answers don't match, have them walk step by step through the information revealed by the size and location of the construction dot. Have students answer the following questions to help them get a fuller understanding of the graph:

- Of the industries shown on the graph, which employs the largest number of women?
  - How can you tell?
  - Which employs the second- and third-largest numbers of women?
- Which industry shown on the graph employs the fewest women?
- In which industry do women earn more than 90% of what men earn?
- In which industry do women earn the least compared to what men in that industry earn?
- Look at the entry for "Mining, quarrying, & oil & gas extraction."
  - Is the number of women working in that industry relatively large or relatively small?
  - What are the median weekly earnings for women in that industry?
  - How do those earnings compare to women's earnings in other industries?
  - What does it mean that the dot for this industry is about halfway across the horizontal axis?

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4. Now that students have read the graph, they can analyze the data it presents. Have students answer the questions below with a small group. Explain that they should take turns answering the questions, and that other group members should add their observations and thoughts about the question.

- Which is the highest-paying industry on the graph?
  - Relatively speaking, how many women are employed in that industry?
  - How would you describe the relationship between this high-paying work and the number of women in the industry?
  - Why do you think this is the situation?
  - What kinds of jobs would be included in this industry?
- In which industry do the most women work?
  - What kinds of jobs would be included in this industry?
  - How does what they earn compare to what men in that industry earn?
  - Why do you think this is the situation?
- Which are the highest-paying industries for women?
  - How many women, relatively speaking, work in those industries?
- Large numbers of women also work in “Financial activities” and “Leisure & hospitality.” What kinds of jobs would be included in these industries?
  - How do women’s earnings in these industries compare to men’s?
  - How do their earnings compare to the earnings of women in other industries?
- Look at The Gender Wage Gap in 2018 infographic. How does Canada compare with the U.S. in terms of gender wage gap?
- Share this fact with students: "In Canada, Indigenous women working full-time, full-year earn an average of 35% less than non-Indigenous men, earning 65 cents to the dollar."
  - How do Indigenous women compare with white Canadian women?
- Discuss with your group any patterns you notice.
  - For example, what pattern do you see regarding how women’s earnings compare to men’s?
  - What pattern do you notice about women’s participation in the highest-paying industries and the industries with the greatest parity in pay?
  - What do you notice about the industries that employ the largest numbers of women?

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5. Discuss the following questions as a class:

- What surprises you most about what the graph shows?
  - Why is it surprising?
  - What do you find most predictable?
  - Why did you expect it?
- What factors do you think affect whether a certain industry has more parity in men's and women's pay? What factors do you think affect industries that are more unequal (have less parity)?
- How does what you're learning from the graph relate to what you think about your future? Are you considering a career in a field that employs a lot of women or one that is dominated by men? Will these findings affect your plan?
- Why do you think women don't earn the same as men in any of the industries shown on the graph? Hint: Think about the different kinds of jobs in each industry.
- How would the graph look different if women earned 100% of what men earn in each industry? In other words, what would the graph look like if men and women were paid equally? Where would the circles be located?
- In the 1960s and 1970s, women in the United States earned 59 cents for every dollar that men earned. In 2009, women earned 80 cents for every dollar men earned. What do you think accounts for the change over time? And the change continues: In 2014, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, women earned 83 cents for every dollar men earned. Why do you think women don't yet earn a dollar for every dollar that men earn?

6. Remind students that the graph shows that, in all the industries studied, women earn less than men. Have students write a paragraph to answer the following question, using three pieces of data from the graph as evidence to support their answer: "How do women's earnings compare to men's?" Explain that their paragraph should include one thesis sentence (the answer to the question), three supporting sentences—each of which should provide evidence for your thesis—and a concluding sentence.

Then ask students to write another paragraph, starting with this sentence: "There are several reasons for the situation described in the paragraph above." Ask students to write two hypotheses they have about why this might be true, and to follow each hypothesis with a short statement explaining why they think their hypothesis is true. Have students conclude their paragraph with a sentence that explains what kind of data they would need to test their hypotheses and how they would go about finding it.