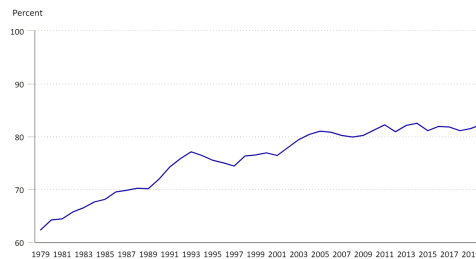


## 7.4: Highlights of Women's Earnings in 2020

In 2020, women who were full-time wage and salary workers had median usual weekly earnings that were 82 percent of those of male full-time wage and salary workers. In 1979, the first year for which comparable earnings data are available, women's earnings were 62 percent of men's. Most of the growth in women's earnings relative to men's occurred in the 1980s (when the women's-to-men's ratio went from 64 percent to 70 percent) and in the 1990s (when the ratio went from 72 percent to 77 percent). Since 2004, the women's-to-men's earnings ratio has remained in the 80 to 83 percent range.

Data on median weekly earnings for 2020 reflect the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the labor market. Comparisons with data on earnings for earlier years should be interpreted with caution. Large declines in employment in 2020, particularly among low-wage workers (who were disproportionately affected by job loss related to the pandemic), resulted in changes in the median earnings distribution. This large and abrupt shift in the earnings distribution during the year manifested as an upward bump in the rate of earnings growth in 2020; however, the underlying rate of growth in workers' median weekly earnings during the year is more difficult to discern because of the sudden, dramatic shift in the earnings distribution. More information on labor market developments in 2020 is available at [www.bls.gov/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-and-response-on-the-employment-situation-news-release.htm](https://www.bls.gov/covid19/effects-of-covid-19-pandemic-and-response-on-the-employment-situation-news-release.htm).

Chart 1. Women's earnings as a percentage of men's, for full-time wage and salary workers, 1979-2020 annual averages



Note: Percentages are calculated from annual averages of median usual weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary workers.

This report presents earnings data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a national monthly sample survey of about 60,000 eligible households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The weekly and hourly earnings estimates in this report reflect information collected from one-fourth of the households in the monthly survey and averaged for the calendar year. The data in this report are distinct from the annual earnings estimates for full-time, year-round workers collected separately in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the CPS and published by the U.S. Census Bureau. (See the [BLS website](#) for an explanation of the differences in these datasets.)

The earnings comparisons in this report are on a broad level and do not control for many factors that can be important in explaining earnings differences, such as job skills and responsibilities, work experience, and specialization. The earnings estimates referenced throughout this report are medians. The median is the midpoint in the earnings distribution, with half of workers having earnings above the median level and half having earnings below.

See the technical notes for more information, including a description of the source of the data and an explanation of the concepts and definitions used in this report.

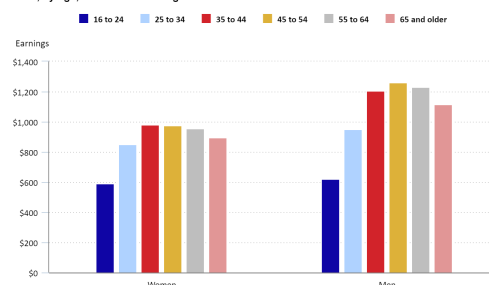
### Earnings of Full-time Workers

This report highlights data for women and men who usually work full time (35 hours or more per week) in wage and salary jobs, with sections focusing on characteristics, such as age, race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, education, occupation, and more.

### Earnings By Age Group

In 2020, median weekly earnings were \$891 for all women age 16 and older. For men age 16 and older, median weekly earnings were \$1,082. Women's median weekly earnings were highest for those between the ages of 35 to 44, with earnings of \$978, and those ages 45 to 54, with earnings of \$977. Women ages 55 to 64 had earnings that were slightly lower, at \$955. For men, earnings were highest for 45- to 54-year-olds, with earnings of \$1,260. Men ages 55 to 64 and ages 35 to 44 had earnings that were slightly lower, \$1,228 and \$1,205, respectively. Young women and men ages 16 to 24 had the lowest earnings (\$589 and \$622, respectively).

Chart 2. Median usual weekly earnings of women and men who are full-time wage and salary workers, by age, 2020 annual averages



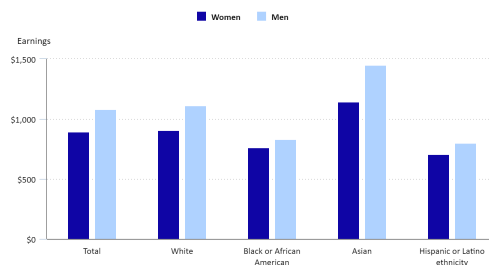
In 2020, women's earnings ranged from 78 percent to 81 percent of men's among workers age 35 and older. For those under age 35, the earnings differences between women and men were smaller. Women ages 25 to 34 earned 90 percent of what men did, while women ages 16 to 24 earned 95 percent of what men earned. The earnings difference between men and women has historically been smaller for those under age 35 than for those in older age groups.

Women's-to-men's earnings ratios have grown substantially for most age groups since 1979. For young workers ages 16 to 24, the gains occurred primarily in the 1980s. For workers ages 25 to 64, the gains continued into the 2000s, but have tapered off in recent years.

### Earnings By Race and Ethnicity

Asian women and men earned more than their White, Black, and Hispanic counterparts in 2020. Among women, Whites (\$905) earned 79 percent as much as Asians (\$1,143); Blacks (\$764) earned 67 percent; and Hispanics (\$705) earned 62 percent. Among men, these earnings differences were even larger: White men (\$1,110) earned 77 percent as much as Asian men (\$1,447); Black men (\$830) earned 57 percent as much; and Hispanic men (\$797) earned 55 percent.

Chart 3. Median usual weekly earnings of women and men who are full-time wage and salary workers, by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2020 annual averages



Note: People of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be of any race. Estimates for the race groups shown (White, Black or African American, and Asian) include Hispanics.

Earnings differences between women and men were largest among Asians and among Whites. Asian women earned 79 percent as much as Asian men in 2020, and White women earned 82 percent as much as White men. In comparison, Black women had median earnings that were 92 percent of Black men's, and Hispanic women's earnings were 89 percent of Hispanic men's.

Women's earnings have increased considerably since 1979 (the first year for which comparable data for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics are available), with White women experiencing the greatest earnings growth. From 1979 to 2019, inflation-adjusted median weekly earnings (also called constant-dollar earnings) increased by 39 percent for White women, by 27 percent for Black women, and by 24 percent for Hispanic women. For White and Black women, gains tapered off around 2004 and showed little net growth through 2019. By contrast, Hispanic women's earnings remained on an upward trend, although substantial earnings growth for them did not begin until the late 1990s. Earnings of White, Black, and Hispanic women increased from 2019 to 2020, but these increases must be interpreted with caution due to the pandemic-related employment declines in 2020. These employment declines, which were most notable among lower-paid workers, put upward pressure on median weekly earnings estimates.

The long-term trend in men's earnings has been quite different than that for women. Inflation-adjusted earnings for White and Black men trended down from 1979 through the first part of the 1990s, followed by a period of growth that stalled in the early 2000s. For Hispanic men, earnings also declined from 1979 through the mid-1990s, then began to trend up. From 1979 through 2019, inflation-adjusted earnings showed little change on net for White (6 percent), Black (3 percent), and Hispanic (4 percent) men. Median weekly earnings increased from 2019 to 2020 for White, Black, and Hispanic men, but these increases reflect the effects of the pandemic-related employment declines and must be interpreted with caution.

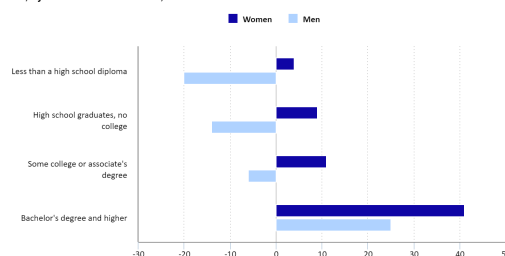
Between 2000 and 2019, inflation-adjusted earnings for Asian women and men remained on an upward trend, with earnings increasing somewhat less for women than men (26 percent and 31 percent, respectively). (Data for Asians are not available prior to 2000.) Median earnings estimates for Asian men and women both increased sharply from 2019 to 2020, but again, these increases likely reflect the impact of pandemic-related employment declines on the earnings distributions.

### Earnings By Educational Attainment

Median weekly earnings vary significantly by educational attainment. Among all workers age 25 and older, the weekly earnings of those without a high school diploma (\$619) were 44 percent of those with a bachelor's degree and higher (\$1,421) in 2020. For workers with a high school diploma who had not attended college, median earnings (\$781) were 55 percent of those for workers with a bachelor's degree and higher. Those with some college or an associate's degree (median weekly earnings of \$903) made 64 percent of what workers with a bachelor's degree and higher made.

In each educational attainment category, the long-term trend in inflation-adjusted earnings has been more favorable for women than for men. The inflation-adjusted earnings of women without a high school diploma changed little (a 4-percent increase) between 1979 and 2020. By contrast, inflation-adjusted earnings for men declined by 20 percent. For those with a bachelor's degree or higher, inflation-adjusted earnings for women have increased by 41 percent since 1979, while earnings for men have risen by 25 percent. (Data refer to workers age 25 and older.)

Chart 4. Percentage change in inflation-adjusted median usual weekly earnings of women and men, by educational attainment, 1979–2020



Note: Data relate to earnings of full-time wage and salary workers age 25 and older.

### Earnings By Occupation

Women and men working full time in management, business, and financial operations occupations had higher median weekly earnings than workers in any other major occupational category in 2020 (\$1,274 for women and \$1,667 for men). Within this category, the highest-earning women were chief executives (\$2,051) and computer and information systems managers (\$1,910). Men in these two occupation groups earned \$2,712 and \$2,091, respectively.

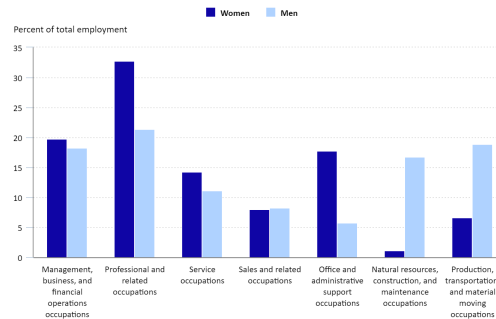
The second-highest paying occupational category for women and men was professional and related occupations (\$1,121 for women and \$1,532 for men). This is a broad occupational category made up of several distinct job groupings for specialized fields, such as computer science and math, architecture and engineering, law, education, and healthcare. Within this diverse category, women who were pharmacists (\$2,160), other physicians (\$1,905), and physician assistants (\$1,894) had the highest median weekly earnings in 2020. For men, those who were lawyers (\$2,324), other physicians (\$2,311), and pharmacists (\$2,286) earned the most.

Women and men employed in service occupations earned the least in 2020 (\$574 for women and \$704 for men). Within this category, women who were employed as fast food and counter workers (\$470) and food preparation workers (\$489) had the lowest median weekly earnings. For men, those who were employed as fast food and counter workers (\$462) and cooks (\$512) earned the least.

### Occupational Distributions of Women and Men

The occupational distributions of female and male full-time workers differ considerably. Compared with men, relatively few women work in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations, and women are far more concentrated in office and administrative support jobs.

Chart 5. Distribution of full-time wage and salary employment for women and men, by major occupational group, 2020 annual averages



Women also are more likely than men to work in professional and related occupations. In 2020, 33 percent of women worked in professional and related occupations, compared with 21 percent of men. Within the professional category, though, the proportion of women employed in the higher-paying jobs is much smaller than the proportion of men employed in them. In 2020, 11 percent of women in professional and related occupations were employed in the relatively high-paying computer (median weekly earnings of \$1,423 for women and \$1,738 for men) and engineering (\$1,382 for women and \$1,626 for men) occupations, compared with 48 percent of men. Women were over twice as likely to work in education (\$1,026 for women and \$1,327 for men) and healthcare (\$1,153 for women and \$1,506 for men) jobs, which generally pay less than computer and engineering jobs. Sixty-six percent of women in professional occupations worked in education and healthcare jobs in 2020, compared with 29 percent of men.

Across all occupational categories, the three most common jobs for women were registered nurse (\$1,240), elementary and middle school teacher (\$1,085), and secretaries and administrative assistants (\$777). Collectively, these occupations employed 6.3 million women in 2020, representing 13 percent of women in full-time wage and salary jobs.

Among men, the most common job by far was truck driver (driver/sales workers and truck drivers, \$916). In 2020, 2.4 million, or 4 percent, of all male full-wage and salary workers were truck drivers. Although engineering jobs are shown separately by specialty (civil, mechanical, etc.) in this report, if combined, engineer would be the second most common job for men. In 2020, a total of 1.8 million men were employed full-time in the 16 designated engineering specialties (median weekly earnings ranging from \$1,595 to \$1,993).

### Earnings For Workers With and Without Children Under 18

In 2020, about one-third of full-time wage and salary workers were parents of children under age 18. (As defined here, “children” include sons, daughters, stepchildren, and adopted children under age 18 who live in the household.) Median weekly earnings for mothers of children under age 18 (\$909) were higher than the earnings for women without children under 18 (\$882). Earnings for fathers of children under 18, at \$1,229, were higher than the earnings of \$1,005 for men without children under 18.

### Earnings By State of Residence

Median weekly earnings and women’s-to-men’s earnings ratios vary by state of residence. (In this report, “state” refers to the 50 states and the District of Columbia.) The differences among the states reflect, in part, variation in the occupations and industries found in each state and differences in the demographic composition of each state’s labor force. Readers should note that sampling error for the state estimates is considerably larger than it is for the national estimates. (See the technical notes for an explanation of sampling error.) Consequently, earnings comparisons between states should be made with caution. Readers also should note that the state estimates are based on workers’ state of residence; their reported earnings are not necessarily from a job located in the same state.

### Weekly Work Hours of Full-time Workers

Among full-time workers (that is, those usually working at a job 35 hours or more per week), men are more likely than women to work more than 40 hours per week. In 2020, 23 percent of men who usually work full time worked 41 or more hours per week, compared with 14 percent of women. Women were more likely than men to work 35 to 39 hours per week: 10 percent of women worked such hours in 2020, while 4 percent of men did. A majority of both male (73 percent) and female (76 percent) full-time workers had a 40-hour workweek. Among these workers, women earned 87 percent as much as men. (These percentages are calculated excluding people who usually work 35 or more hours per week and whose hours vary.)

### Earnings of Part-time Workers

Women are more likely than men to work part-time—that is, less than 35 hours per week on a sole or main job. Women who worked part-time made up 22 percent of all female wage and salary workers in 2020. In comparison, 11 percent of men in wage and salary jobs worked part-time.

Median weekly earnings for female part-timers were \$309 in 2020, little different than the \$305 median for men.

Part-time workers are more likely to be under age 25 than full-time workers. Among part-timers, 29 percent of women and 42 percent of men were under age 25 in 2020. Among full-time workers, 8 percent of women and 9 percent of men were under age 25.

### Earnings of Workers Paid By the Hour

In 2020, 58 percent of women and 54 percent of men in wage and salary jobs were paid by the hour. Women who were paid hourly rates had median hourly earnings of \$15.22 in 2020, which were 86 percent of the \$17.75 median for men.

Among workers who were paid hourly rates in 2020, 2 percent of women and 1 percent of men had hourly earnings at or below the prevailing federal minimum wage of \$7.25. See the technical notes for information about BLS estimates of the number of minimum wage workers.

### Technical Notes

The estimates in this report were obtained from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which provide information on the labor force, employment, and unemployment. The survey is conducted monthly for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) by the U.S. Census Bureau using a scientifically selected national sample of about 60,000 eligible households representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The survey data on earnings are based on one-fourth of the CPS monthly sample and are limited to wage and salary workers. All self-employed workers, both incorporated and unincorporated, are excluded from the data presented in this report.

The earnings comparisons in this report are on a broad level and do not control for many factors that can help explain earnings differences. This includes the direct comparisons of earnings levels among demographic groups and the women’s-to-men’s earnings ratios (that is, women’s earnings as a percentage of men’s) shown in the tables. For example, the overall ratio of women’s-to-men’s earnings for full-time workers presented here is not controlled for differences in important determinants of earnings such as age, occupation, and educational attainment. The earnings comparisons in this report are not restricted to workers with otherwise comparable characteristics and comparable jobs. Even controlling for one of the factors may not fully explain earnings differences. Comparisons of women’s and men’s earnings by detailed occupation, for example, are not simultaneously controlled for differences in key factors such as age, job skills and responsibilities, work experience, and specialization.

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### Concepts and Definitions

The principal concepts and definitions used in this report are described briefly below.

**Wage and salary workers** are people age 16 and older who receive wages, salaries, commissions, tips, payments in kind, or piece rates on their sole or principal job. This group includes employees in both the public and private sectors. All self-employed workers are excluded whether or not their businesses are incorporated.

*Full-time workers* are defined for the purpose of these estimates as those who usually work 35 hours or more per week at their sole or principal job. The federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) does not define full- or part-time employment.

*Part-time workers* are defined for the purpose of these estimates as those who usually work fewer than 35 hours per week at their sole or principal job. The federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) does not define full- or part-time employment.

*Usual weekly earnings* reflect earnings before taxes and other deductions and include any overtime pay, commissions, or tips usually received (at the main job in the case of multiple jobholders). Before 1994, survey respondents were asked how much they usually earned per week. Since January 1994, respondents have been asked to identify the easiest way for them to report earnings (hourly, weekly, biweekly, twice monthly, monthly, annually, or other) and how much they usually earn in the reported time period. Earnings reported on a basis other than weekly are converted to a weekly equivalent. The term “usual” is determined by each respondent’s own understanding of the term. If the respondent asks for a definition of “usual,” interviewers are instructed to define the term as more than half the weeks worked during the past 4 or 5 months.

*Median earnings* reflect the midpoint in a given earnings distribution, with half of the workers having earnings above the median and the other half having earnings below the median. This applies to both usual weekly and hourly earnings estimates.

The BLS procedure for estimating the median of a weekly earnings distribution places each reported or calculated weekly earnings value into a \$50-wide interval that is centered around a multiple of \$50. Similarly, for hourly earnings, medians are calculated based on earnings distributions using \$0.50-wide intervals that are centered around multiples of \$0.50. In both cases, the median is calculated through the linear interpolation of the interval in which the median lies.

Changes over time in the medians for specific groups may not necessarily be consistent with the movements estimated for the overall median boundary. The most common reasons for this possible anomaly are as follows:

There could be a change in the relative weights of the subgroups. For example, the median earnings of 16- to 24-year-olds, and 25 years and older may rise. However, if the lower-earning 16-to-24 age group accounts for a greatly increased share of the total, the overall median could actually fall.

There could be a large change in the shape of the distribution of reported earnings, particularly near a median boundary. This change could be caused by survey observations that are clustered at rounded values, such as \$700 or \$800. An estimate lying in a \$50-wide centered interval containing such a cluster tends to change more slowly than one in other intervals. Consider, for example, the calculation of the median for a multi-peaked earnings distribution that shifts over time. As this distribution shifts, the median does not necessarily move at the same rate. Specifically, the median takes relatively more time to move through a frequently reported earnings interval, but once above the upper limit of such an interval, it can move relatively quickly to the next frequently reported interval. BLS procedures for estimating medians mitigate such irregular movements; however, users should be cautious of these effects when evaluating short-term changes in the medians and in ratios of the medians.

*Workers paid hourly rates* are employed wage and salary workers who report that they are paid by the hour on their job. Typically, workers who are paid an hourly wage have made up approximately 60 percent of all wage and salary workers. Estimates of workers paid by the hour include both full- and part-time workers unless otherwise specified.

*Hourly earnings data* are for wage and salary workers who are paid by the hour and pertain to earnings from a person’s sole or principal job. Hourly earnings for hourly paid workers do not include overtime pay, commissions, or tips received.

*Workers paid at or below the federal minimum wage* include only workers who are paid hourly rates. Salaried workers and other nonhourly paid workers are excluded, even though some have earnings that, if converted to hourly rates, would be at or below the federal minimum wage.

*The estimates of workers paid at or below the federal minimum wage* in this report are based solely on whether the hourly wage they report (which does not include overtime pay, tips, or commissions) is at or below the federal minimum wage. Some respondents might round hourly earnings when answering survey questions. As a result, some workers might report having hourly earnings above or below the federal minimum wage when, in fact, they earn the minimum wage.

Some workers who reported earnings below the prevailing federal minimum wage may not be covered by federal or state minimum wage laws because of exclusions and exemptions in the statutes. Thus, the presence of workers with hourly earnings below the federal minimum wage does not necessarily indicate violations of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) or state statutes in cases where such standards apply. The CPS does not include questions on whether workers are covered by the minimum wage provisions of the FLSA or by individual state or local minimum wage laws.

The estimates presented in this report likely understate the actual number of workers with hourly earnings at or below the minimum wage. BLS does not routinely estimate the hourly earnings of workers not paid by the hour because there are data quality concerns associated with constructing such an estimate.

Regular collection of earnings data in the basic CPS began in 1979. The prevailing federal minimum wage from 1979 to the present is as follows, with the last change occurring in 2009.

Federal minimum wage	Effective date
\$2.90	January 1, 1979
\$3.10	January 1, 1980
\$3.35	January 1, 1981
\$3.80	April 1, 1990
\$4.25	April 1, 1991
\$4.75	October 1, 1996
\$5.15	September 1, 1997
\$5.85	July 24, 2007
\$6.55	July 24, 2008
\$7.25	July 24, 2009

When the minimum wage has increased during a given year, the annual average estimates of the number of minimum wage workers reflect both minimum wage levels in effect during the year. For example, data for 2007 reflect the number of workers who earned the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 for January to July and the number of workers who earned the minimum wage of \$5.85 for August to December.

*Race* is reported by the household survey respondent. In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget standards, White, Black or African American, and Asian are terms used to describe a person’s race. Beginning in 2003, people in these categories are those who selected that race group only. People who identify more than one race are tabulated separately in the category Two or More Races. Before 2003, people identified one group as their main race. For more information on the 2003 changes to questions on race, see [“Revisions to the Current Population Survey Effective in January 2003.”](#) Data for other race groups—American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders—and for people of Two or More Races are included in totals but not separately identified in this report because the number of survey respondents is too small to develop estimates of acceptable reliability.

*Hispanic or Latino ethnicity* refers to people who identified themselves in the survey process as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. People who identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino ethnicity may be of any race and are included in estimates for the race groups (White, Black or African American, and Asian) in addition to being shown separately.

*Married, spouse present* refers to people in either opposite-sex or same-sex marriages living together in the same household, even though one spouse may be temporarily absent on business, on vacation, on a visit, in a hospital, or for other reasons.

*Other marital status* refers to people who never married; and those who are widowed; divorced; separated; and married, spouse absent. Separated includes people with legal separations, those living apart with intentions of obtaining a divorce, and other people permanently or temporarily separated because of marital discord. Married, spouse absent, includes married people living apart because either the husband or wife was employed and living at a considerable distance from home, was serving away from home in the Armed Forces, had moved to another area, or had a different place of residence for any other reason except those listed in the separated definition above.

*Inflation-adjusted earnings* shown in this report use the Consumer Price Index research series using current methods (CPI-U-RS) to convert current dollars to constant, or inflation-adjusted, dollars. BLS has made numerous improvements to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the years. Although these improvements make the CPI more accurate, the histories of official CPI series are not adjusted to reflect the improvements. Because many researchers need a historical series that measures price change consistently over time, BLS developed the CPI-U-RS to provide an estimate of the CPI that incorporates most of the methodological improvements made since 1978 into the entire series. For further information, see the [CPI research series webpage](#).

This report uses the most recent version of the CPI-U-RS available at the time of production. Users should note that the CPI-U-RS is subject to periodic revision. As a result, the rate of inflation incorporated into the inflation-adjusted median earnings estimates in this report may differ from the rate used in previous reports in this series or in other publications.

### Reliability

Statistics based on the CPS are subject to both sampling and non-sampling error. When a sample, rather than the entire population, is surveyed, there is a chance that the sample estimates may differ from the true population values they represent. The component of this difference that occurs because samples differ by chance is known as sampling error, and its variability is measured by the standard error of the estimate. There is about a 90-percent chance, or level of confidence, that an estimate based on a sample will differ by no more than 1.645 standard errors from the true population value because of sampling error. BLS analyses are generally conducted at the 90-percent level of confidence.

Readers should be aware that because of sampling error, apparent differences between estimates for two or more groups or categories may not be statistically significant, and therefore not meaningfully different from one another. Standard errors are shown with many of the median earnings estimates in this report to help readers evaluate differences in earnings estimates.

The CPS data also are affected by non-sampling error. Non-sampling error can occur for many reasons, including the failure to sample a segment of the population, inability to obtain information on all respondents in the sample, inability or unwillingness of respondents to provide correct information, and errors made in the collection or processing of the data. Further information about the reliability of data from the CPS is available on the [CPS Technical Documentation page](#) of the BLS website.

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