

INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH

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Women's Earnings Fall; U.S. Census Bureau Finds Rising Gender Wage Gap

[Washington, DC] – Women make only 75.5 cents for every dollar that men earn, according to a new release by the U.S. Census Bureau. Between 2002 and 2003, median annual earnings for full-time year-round women workers shrank by 0.6 percent, to \$30,724, while men's earnings remained unchanged, at \$40,668. The 1.4 percent decrease in the gender wage ratio is the largest backslide in 12 years (since 1991). The 2003 Census data also show the first decline in women's real earnings since 1995.

"Women continue to take a major hit in the on-going economic slowdown," commented Dr. Heidi Hartmann, President of the Institute for Women's Policy Research. "No progress on the wage ratio has been made since 2001, and women actually lost ground this year. Falling real wages for women indicate a decline in the quality of their jobs. The economic recovery continues to disadvantage women by failing to provide strong job growth at all wage levels."

Dr. Barbara Gault, IWPR Director of Research, stated, "To address the continuing disparities in pay between women and men, we need to raise the minimum wage, improve enforcement of Equal Employment Opportunity Laws, help women succeed in higher-paying, traditionally male occupations, and create more flexible, family friendly workplace policies."

The new Census Bureau release also documents rising rates of poverty and uninsurance for women. According to Dr. Vicky Lovell, IWPR Study Director, "The poverty rate for female-headed households increased to 28 percent in 2003, and poverty among adult women rose to 12.4 percent. Over 17 million women have no health insurance. Our systems for ensuring health care and economic security are failing America's women."

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