



**NATIONAL  
WOMEN'S  
LAW CENTER**

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**JANUARY 2020 | FACT SHEET**

# Equal Pay for Asian American and Pacific Islander Women

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Asian women<sup>1</sup> who work full time, year round in the United States are typically paid only 90 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>2</sup> This gap, which amounts to a loss of \$6,007 a year, means that Asian women have to work more than 13 months—until early February this year—to make as much as white, non-Hispanic men did last year alone. Many communities of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women experience much larger wage gaps compared to white, non-Hispanic men.

***Asian women working full time, year round are typically paid only 90 cents for every dollar paid to their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts – and the wage gap is substantially larger for some communities of Asian American and Pacific Islander women.***

The gap between Asian women's and white, non-Hispanic men's earnings is eight cents smaller than the wage gap for all women compared to all men: women working full time, year round in the United States are typically paid only 82 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts. However, the gap between Asian women's and Asian men's earnings is larger: Asian women working full time, year round in the United States are typically paid just 79 cents for every dollar compared to Asian men.<sup>3</sup>

This factsheet uses multiple data sources to examine data on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women. As a result, there are some instances where the data refers to Asian women alone. In those instances, the term "Asian women" is used throughout this analysis. In instances where the data refers to Asian American or Pacific Islander women, the term "AAPI women" is used. For more information, see endnote 1.

## The wage gap is substantially wider for some communities of AAPI women.

Some communities of AAPI women experience a larger wage gap than is reflected in the 90 cent wage gap for Asian women overall. Among full-time, year-round workers:<sup>4</sup>

- Nepalese, Burmese, Fijian, and Cambodian women are typically paid less than 60 percent—50 percent, 52 percent, 55 percent, and 57 percent respectively—of what white, non-Hispanic men are typically paid.
- Indonesian, Tongan, Vietnamese, Thai, Laotian, Guamanian/Chamorro, Hawaiian, Samoan, Hmong, and Bangladeshi women all are typically paid less than 80 cents for every dollar typically paid to white, non-Hispanic men.
- A few communities of AAPI women are typically paid more than white, non-Hispanic men: Malaysian, Taiwanese, and Indian women were respectively paid \$1.25, \$1.23, and \$1.20 for every dollar typically paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>5</sup> However, Malaysian and Indian women still experience a gender wage gap: they make just 75 and 73 cents respectively, compared to their Malaysian and Indian male counterparts. And while Chinese women are typically paid the same as white, non-Hispanic men, compared to Chinese men, they are paid just 83 cents on the dollar.

### AAPI WOMEN'S WAGE EQUALITY BY COMMUNITY

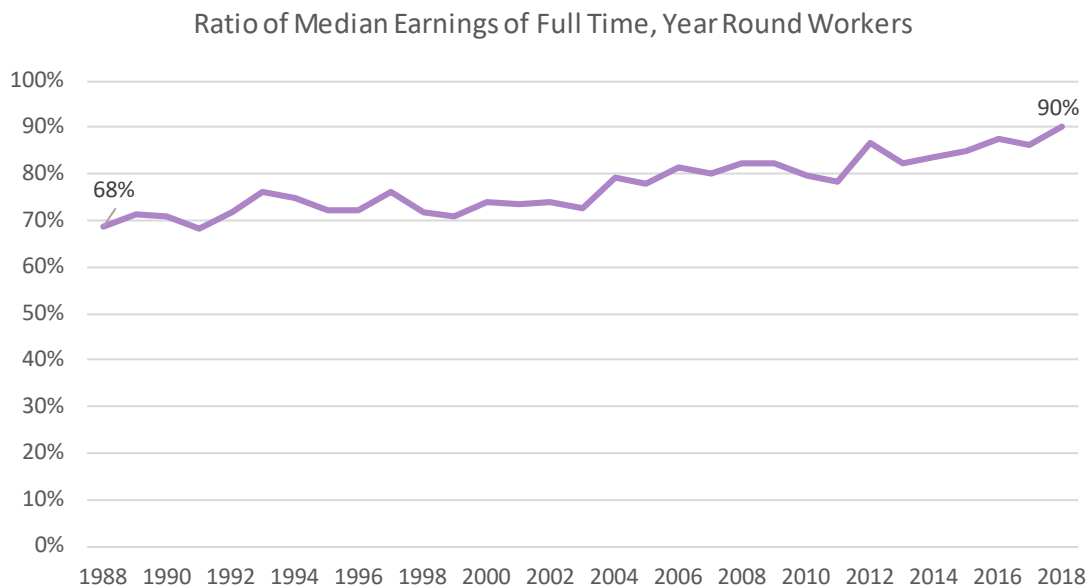
Community	AAPI Women's Earnings	What AAPI women make for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men make	What AAPI women make for every dollar AAPI men make (within community)
Malaysian	\$75,000	\$1.25	\$0.75
Taiwanese	\$74,000	\$1.23	\$1.00
Indian	\$72,000	\$1.20	\$0.73
Chinese	\$60,000	\$1.00	\$0.83
Japanese	\$55,000	\$0.92	\$0.73
Sri Lankan	\$54,000	\$0.90	\$0.68
Korean	\$54,000	\$0.90	\$0.86
Pakistani	\$53,000	\$0.88	\$0.88
Filipino	\$50,000	\$0.83	\$0.96
Indonesian	\$47,300	\$0.79	\$0.79
Tongan	\$45,000	\$0.75	\$1.25
Vietnamese	\$40,000	\$0.67	\$0.80
Thai	\$40,000	\$0.67	\$0.80
Laotian	\$40,000	\$0.67	\$1.00
Guamanian/Chamorro	\$39,500	\$0.66	\$0.92
Hawaiian	\$38,000	\$0.63	\$0.95
Samoan	\$37,100	\$0.62	\$0.84
Hmong	\$36,800	\$0.61	\$0.97
Bangladeshi	\$36,000	\$0.60	\$0.86
Cambodian	\$34,000	\$0.57	\$0.85
Fijian	\$33,000	\$0.55	\$0.59
Burmese	\$31,000	\$0.52	\$1.03
Nepalese	\$30,000	\$0.50	\$0.81

NWLC calculations based on 2018 American Community Survey 1-year estimates using IPUMS-USA available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> (IPUMS). Figures are based on women's and men's median earnings for full-time, year-round workers. White, non-Hispanic men typically made \$60,000 in 2018. Indian women represent those who self-selected "Asian Indian" as their race.

## The wage gap between Asian women and white, non-Hispanic men has narrowed – but there’s still work to be done to close it.

- 1988, the earliest year for which data are available, an Asian woman working full time, year round typically was paid only 68 cents for every dollar paid to her white, non-Hispanic male counterpart. By 2018, this figure stood at 90 cents—adding up to a wage gap that is 22 cents smaller than it was three decades ago.<sup>6</sup>

### Asian Women's/White, non-Hispanic Men's Earnings Ratio



- While the wage gap has narrowed somewhat over the last few decades, an Asian woman starting her career today still stands to lose \$240,280 to the wage gap over a 40-year career. This means Asian women would typically have to work 44 years to make what white, non-Hispanic men were paid in just 40 years.<sup>7</sup>

### In the ten worst states for Asian women’s wage equality, Asian women are typically paid less than 70 percent of what their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts are paid.<sup>8</sup>

- While Asian women nationally are typically paid 90 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men, they can face even steeper wage gaps depending on where they live. In Alaska, the worst state for Asian women’s wage equality, they are typically paid just 54 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.
- Annual wage gap losses compound over time. Nationally, today’s wage gap will cost Asian women \$240,280 over a 40-year career. But in two states – Alaska and Louisiana – and the District of Columbia, Asian women stand to lose over \$1 million over a lifetime to the wage gap if they do not work years or even decades longer than their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts.

## TEN WORST STATES FOR ASIAN WOMEN'S WAGE EQUALITY

Rank	State	What Asian women make for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men make	Lifetime Losses Due to Wage Gap	Age at which an Asian woman's career earnings catch up to white, non-Hispanic men's career earnings at age 60
	<b>United States</b>	<b>\$ 0.90</b>	<b>\$ 240,280</b>	<b>64</b>
10	Hawaii	\$ 0.68	\$ 764,080	78
9	Kansas	\$ 0.68	\$ 680,760	79
8	Oklahoma	\$ 0.67	\$ 693,280	80
7	Mississippi	\$ 0.64	\$ 717,120	82
6	Vermont	\$ 0.64	\$ 737,920	83
5	Utah	\$ 0.63	\$ 862,080	83
4	Idaho	\$ 0.59	\$ 829,520	88
3	South Dakota	\$ 0.57	\$ 832,080	90
2	Louisiana	\$ 0.57	\$ 1,010,680	90
1	Alaska	\$ 0.54	\$ 1,235,560	95

Source: State wage gaps calculated by National Women's Law Center (NWLC) are based on 2014-2018 American Community Survey Five Year Estimates. National wage gap calculated by NWLC is based on 2019 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "What an Asian woman makes for every dollar a white, non-Hispanic man makes" is the ratio of Asian women's and white, non-Hispanic men's median earnings for full-time, year-round workers. "Lifetime losses due to wage gap" or the "Lifetime Wage Gap" is what an Asian woman would lose, based on today's wage gap, over a 40-year career. Figures are not adjusted for inflation. Earnings are in 2018 dollars. Ranks based on unrounded data. "Age at which an Asian woman's career earnings catch up to white, non-Hispanic men's career earnings at age 60" assumes all workers begin work at age 20. Assuming white, non-Hispanic men have a 40-year career, this is the age at which Asian women are able to retire with the same lifetime earnings as their male counterparts. People in both surveys self-identified as either male or female. Asian women in both surveys are those who self-identified as Asian. White, non-Hispanic men in both surveys refer to those who have self-identified as white but who are not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

### AAPI women experience a wage gap at every education level, and it is wider among those with less education.

- Among full-time, year-round workers, AAPI women without a high school diploma typically make only 74 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men without a high school diploma make. AAPI women with an associate's degree typically make less—by about \$2,000 each year—than white, non-Hispanic men with only a high school diploma (about 93 cents for every dollar).<sup>9</sup>
- While the wage gap for AAPI women declines as they obtain more education, AAPI women must obtain a bachelor's degree or more before their typical wages exceed those of white, non-Hispanic men with an associate's degree.

### AAPI WOMEN'S WAGE EQUALITY BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational Attainment	AAPI women's earnings	White, non-Hispanic men's earnings	What AAPI women make for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men make	Wage gap
At least 9th grade but no high school diploma	\$28,000	\$38,000	\$0.74	\$0.26
High school diploma	\$30,000	\$45,000	\$0.67	\$0.33
Some college, no degree	\$37,400	\$50,000	\$0.75	\$0.25
Associate's degree	\$42,000	\$55,000	\$0.76	\$0.24
Bachelor's degree	\$60,000	\$76,000	\$0.79	\$0.21
Master's degree	\$84,000	\$96,000	\$0.88	\$0.13
Professional degree	\$120,000	\$143,000	\$0.84	\$0.16
Doctorate degree	\$100,000	\$112,000	\$0.89	\$0.11

NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-year estimates using IPUMS. "What a woman makes for every dollar a man makes" is the ratio of female and male median earnings for full-time, year-round workers. Earnings are in 2017 dollars. The "wage gap" is the additional money a woman would have to make for every dollar made by a man in order to have equal annual earnings. AAPI women are those who self-identified as Asian and/or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. White, non-Hispanic men self-identified as white but who are not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin

### AAPI women’s wage gap is widest among older women.

- Among full-time, year-round workers ages 25-44, AAPI women typically make \$1.09 for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men make—but compared to AAPI men ages 25-44, they make just 86 cents.
- Moreover, the wage gap increases significantly as AAPI women grow older. AAPI women ages 45-64 typically make only 71 cents for every dollar made by their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts, and AAPI women 65 and older typically make only 66 cents for every dollar made by white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>10</sup> These larger gaps mean that AAPI women are falling behind at the very time they need additional resources to invest in their families and save for retirement.

### Motherhood widens the wage gap for working AAPI women.

- AAPI mothers who work full time, year round typically make 86 cents (\$62,000) for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic fathers (\$70,000) – and only 74 cents for every dollar paid to AAPI fathers (\$84,000).<sup>11</sup>

### The wage gap persists regardless of where AAPI women live, but is the largest for those living in cities.

- AAPI women living in cities typically make about 76 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men make, a gap of \$16,900 per year.
- By contrast, AAPI women living in suburban areas typically make 86 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men make, a gap of \$19,000 per year.

### AAPI WOMEN’S WAGE EQUALITY BY METROPOLITAN STATUS

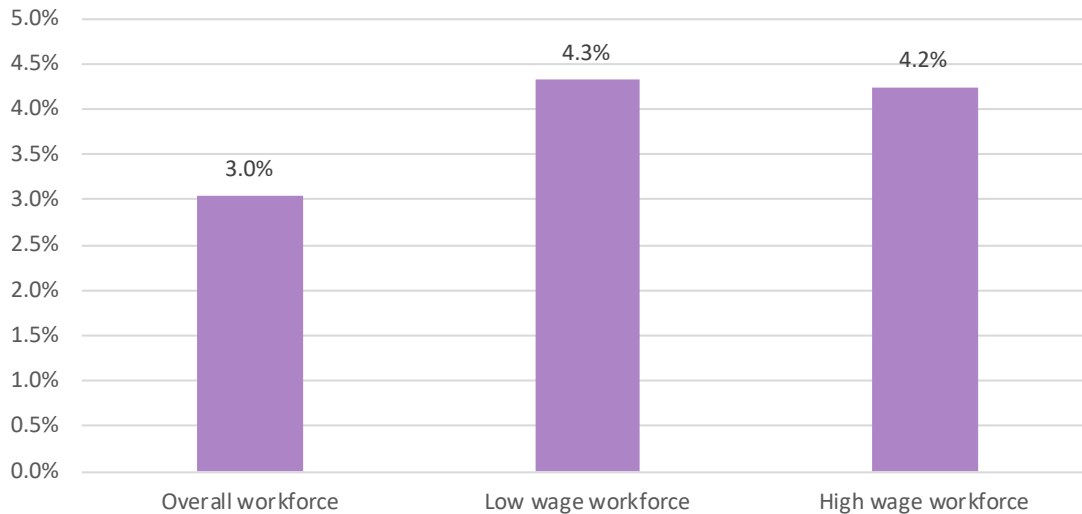
	AAPI Women’s Earnings	White, non-Hispanic Men’s Earnings	What AAPI Women Are Paid for Every Dollar Paid to White, non-Hispanic Men	Wage Gap
Rural	\$36,000	\$47,000	\$0.77	\$0.23
City	\$53,100	\$70,000	\$0.76	\$0.24
Suburban Areas	\$56,000	\$65,000	\$0.86	\$0.14

NWLC calculations based on 2018 American Community survey using IPUMS. Figures are in 2018 dollars. Median earnings are for full-time, year-round workers. “Rural” refers to those whose households were located outside of a metro area. “City” refers to those whose households were located inside a metro area and in a central/principal city. “Suburban” refers to those whose households were located inside a metro but outside central/principal city. AAPI women are those who self-identified as Asian and/or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. White, non-Hispanic men self-identified as white but who are not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

### AAPI women are overrepresented in both the low-wage and high-wage workforces, and experience a wage gap in both.

- AAPI women are overrepresented in the most poorly paid jobs in the nation. AAPI women’s share of the low-wage workforce, or the 40 jobs with the lowest median hourly wages, is more than 1.4 times larger than their share of the overall workforce (4.3 percent versus 3.0 percent).<sup>12</sup>
- In low-wage occupations, AAPI women working full time, year round experience a wage gap, typically making 83 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men in these same occupations make.<sup>13</sup>
- Interestingly, AAPI women are also overrepresented in the high-wage workforce: their share of these jobs is 1.4 times larger than their share of the overall workforce (4.2 percent versus 3.0 percent). AAPI women working in these high-wage occupations full time, year round still experience a wage gap, however, typically making only 91 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men in these same occupations make.

## AAPI Women's Share of Low Wage, High Wage and Overall Workforces



Source: NWLC calculations based on 2018 American Community Survey using IPUMS. Low and high wage jobs can be defined a variety of ways. Here, low wage jobs are defined as the 40 detailed jobs with the lowest median hourly wages based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics. High wage jobs are defined as the 40 detailed jobs with the highest median hourly wages. AAPI women are those who self-identified as Asian and/or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. White, non-Hispanic men self-identified as white but who are not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

### In a variety of occupations—those that are well-paid and poorly paid, those that are female-dominated and those that are non-traditional for women—AAPI women experience a wage gap.<sup>14</sup>

- AAPI women working as hand laborers and freight, stock, and material movers—a male-dominated, low-wage occupation—make 74 cents for every dollar paid to their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts.
- AAPI women working as servers—a female-dominated, low-wage occupation—make 75 cents for every dollar paid to their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts.
- AAPI women working as customer service representatives—a female-dominated, mid-wage occupation—make 93 cents for every dollar paid to their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts.
- AAPI women who are physicians—a male-dominated, high-wage occupation—make 76 cents for every dollar paid to their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts.

### Union membership lifts wages for Asian women.<sup>15</sup>

- Asian women who belong to unions typically make about \$1,033 per week compared to the \$929 per week typically made by non-union Asian women—that is, 11 percent more.
- Among full-time workers, Asian women who are union members and those who are not both make more than their white male counterparts. However, the wage gap between Asian women and Asian men who are union members is 46 percent smaller, at 14 cents, than the 25 cent wage gap between non-union Asian women and their Asian male peers.

- 1 Data in this analysis comes from the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey (CPS) and American Community Survey (ACS) and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. Because data comes from multiple data sources, there are some instances where the data refers to Asian women alone. In those instances, the term “Asian women” is used throughout this analysis. In instances where the data refers to Asian American or Pacific Islander women, the term “AAPI women” is used. Asian women alone include those who only self-identified in one of the above surveys as Asian alone. “AAPI women” are those who self-identified as Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or Asian Hawaiian/Pacific Islander in the ACS survey and Asian and/or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander in the CPS Survey. People in all surveys self-identified as either male or female. Please reference the individual sources cited for further detail.
- 2 This fact sheet only addresses the wage gap for Asian women and AAPI women, but the wage gaps for other groups of women compared to white, non-Hispanic men are also substantial. Among full-time, year-round workers, Black women make only 62 cents for every dollar made by white, non-Hispanic men, white, non-Hispanic women, 79 cents, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander women, 61 cents, Native women, 57 cents, and Latinas, 54 cents. Wage gap figures are calculated by taking the median earnings of women and men working full, time year round. Median earnings describe the earnings of a worker at the 50th percentile – right in the middle.
- 3 National Women’s Law Center (NWLC) calculations from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2019 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (2019 CPS\_ ASEC), Table PINC-05: Work Experience in 2018—People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2018, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Sex, available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html>.
- 4 NWLC calculations based on 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS): Version 9.0* [dataset]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2019 available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> (IPUMS). Figures are for full-time, year-round workers. The American Community Survey allows respondents to select from several race categories. See generally <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaire-archive.2018.html>. Women in each specific race subgroup self-selected into that race category in the American Community Survey.
- 5 Indian women are those who self-selected “Asian Indian” as their race in the 2018 ACS, *supra* note 6.
- 6 NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Historical Data, Table P-38: Full-Time, Year-Round Workers by Median Earnings and Sex, available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-people.html>. Median earnings are in 2018 dollars. Figures may differ from those in other NWLC reports due to rounding or updated Census estimates. Data for white, non-Hispanic men are for “white alone, not Hispanic” from 2002-2018 and “white not Hispanic” from 1988-2001. Data for Asian women are for “Asian alone” from 2002-2018 and “Asian” from 1988-2001.
- 7 Figure assumes a wage gap of \$6,007—the gap in median earnings between full-time, year-round working Asian women (\$55,569) and white, non-Hispanic men (\$61,576) in 2018—each year for 40 years. Figures are not adjusted for inflation.
- 8 State wage gaps calculated by National Women’s Law Center (NWLC) are based on 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5- year estimates. National wage gap calculated by NWLC is based on 2019 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Figures are based on women’s and men’s median earnings for full-time, year-round workers. “Lifetime losses due to wage gap” is what Asian women would lose, based on today’s wage gap, over a 40-year career, compared to white, non-Hispanic men. Figures are not adjusted for inflation. Earnings are in 2018 dollars. Ranks based on unrounded data.
- 9 NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey using IPUMS, *supra* note 6. Figures are for full-time, year-round workers. AAPI women are those who self-identified as Asian and/or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.
- 10 *Id.*
- 11 *Id.*
- 12 *Id.* This analysis defines low wage jobs as the 40 jobs with the lowest median hourly wage in 2018 based on BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics, data for May 2018, available at [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm). High wage jobs are defined as the 40 jobs with the highest median hourly wages.
- 13 *Id.* Figures are for full-time, year-round workers.
- 14 *Id.* Figures are for full-time, year-round workers. Female-dominated occupations are more than 60 percent female and male-dominated occupations are more than 60 percent male based on Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey Annual Averages for 2018, Table 11: Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, available at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf>. Wage level was determined by examining 820 detailed occupations with annual mean earnings categorized by the Occupational Employment Statistics data for May 2018, available at [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm). High-wage jobs were in the top one-fifth, mid-wage jobs were in the middle three-fifths, low-wage jobs were in the bottom one-fifth.
- 15 NWLC calculations based on Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Union Members 2018, Table 1: Union Affiliation of Employed Wage and Salary Workers by Selected Characteristics, 2017-2018 Annual Averages and, Table 2: Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers by Union Affiliation and Selected Characteristics, 2017-2018 Annual Averages, available at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm>. Data are also available for workers whose jobs are covered by a union contract but are not reported here. Wage gaps are calculated based on median weekly earnings. These data differ slightly from the often-used measure of median annual earnings for full-time, year-round workers.