



University of Nevada, Reno

Latino Research Center

Centro de Investigación Latino

Nevada's Latina Workforce: Unveiling Pay Gap Issues

"Latinas working full time, year-round were typically paid just 57 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. This pay gap amounts to a loss of \$2,538 every month, \$30,450 every year, and \$1,218,000 over a 40-year career."

Inequalities in society have given rise to fundamental challenges in healthcare,² education,³ and wage gap issues we see today.⁴ The primary drivers of these issues stem from disparities in race, ethnicity, and gender. These identities often play a factor in impacting opportunities of advancement for women. For instance, women still face a lower likelihood of advancing into leadership roles compared to men.⁵ Further, race is another social category that impacts inequalities such as racial discrimination that employees experience in the workplace.⁶ Race is a visible characteristic that leads to discrimination impacting opportunities and advancement for individuals from marginalized racial and ethnic groups. For example, Latinos describe experiencing discrimination because of their skin color and being considered not smart.⁷ Further, stereotypes associated with Latinos are often portrayed in media as well, presenting them in poverty, temperamental, and as criminals.⁸ Collectively, these stereotypes significantly contribute to the contemporary challenges, particularly the disparities in wages among Latinas.

Women in the Workforce

As of 2022, women accounted for 56.8% of the labor workforce.⁹ Nevertheless, women with children, particularly children under the age of 3, are more likely to leave the workforce.¹⁰ This trend is often attributed to the biases they encounter within the workplace.¹¹

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated gender disparities in the workforce. From 2019 to 2021, there was a 3.4% decrease in the proportion of women engaged in full-time, year-round employment.¹² This decline was, in part, a consequence of specific sectors that women typically dominate such as retail, food services, and manufacturing being directly affected by the pandemic.

Furthermore, when examining weekly earnings in 2023 women receive median weekly earnings amounting to \$1,005, while men earn \$1,208.¹³ In particular, Hispanic women earn 87.3% compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups,

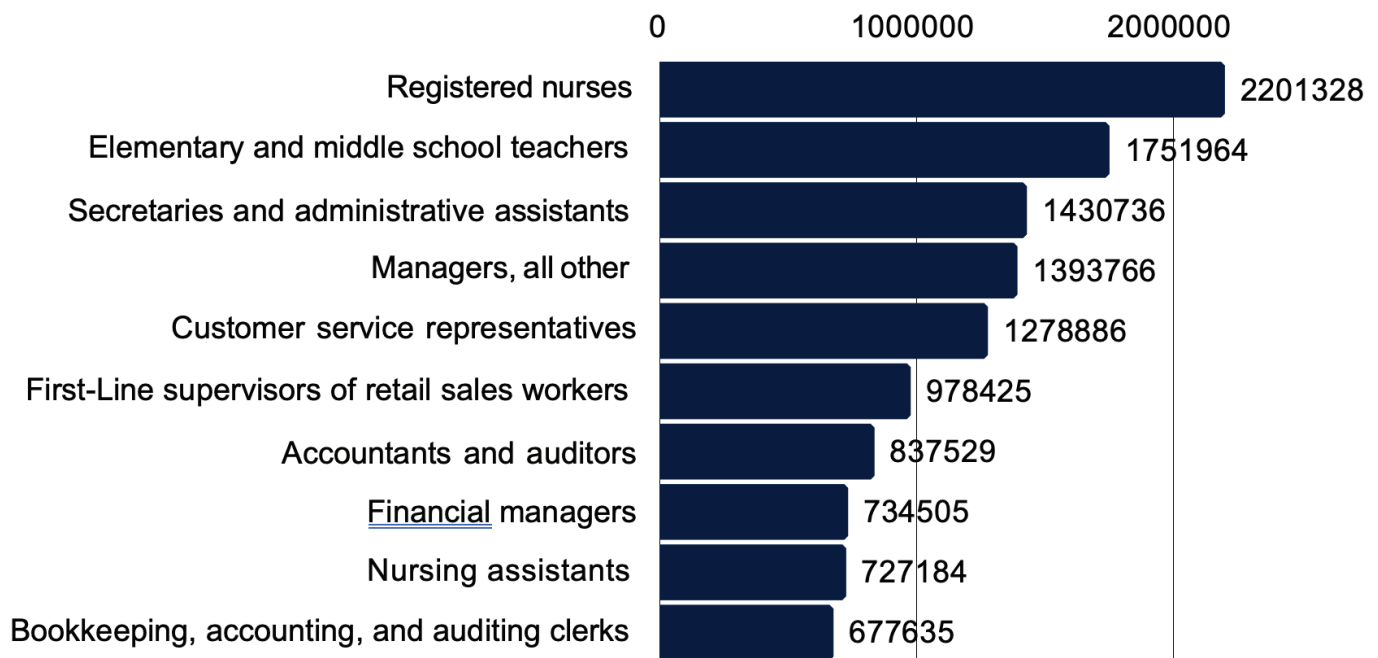
Hispanic women have a median weekly income of \$813, in contrast to Black women (\$886), White women (\$1,021), and Asian women (\$1,217).¹³

Latinas in the Workforce

Hispanics and Latinx individuals play a vital role in the U.S. economy, with Hispanic women ages 20 or older constituting 59.9% of the workforce compared to other racial/ethnic groups.¹⁴ However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the workforce participation of Hispanic/Latinas. Women had to balance competing demands as their work and family roles conflicted during the pandemic.¹⁵ Three key factors have contributed to the disadvantages



Top 10 Common Occupations for Women in the Workforce



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2021, Data includes full-time employed civilian women 16 years and older.

and economic hardships experienced by Latinas during the pandemic.¹⁶ First, their employment was notably affected due to the sectors directly impacted by the pandemic, with Hispanic women being more likely to work in service, sales, and office occupations.¹⁴ Approximately 700,000 Latinas lost their jobs between March and May 2020.¹⁶ Second, their caretaking responsibilities made it difficult to continue employment. Latinas experienced a greater workforce departure during the COVID-19 pandemic, likely due to their domestic roles compared to other groups of women.¹⁷ Such findings may relate to the fact that Latinas are often tasked with many caregiving obligations beyond childcare such as caring for parents, siblings, or other family members.^{18,19} Some women describe the difficult decision to leave their job during the pandemic due to childcare and having to help manage their children's learning while not experiencing language barriers.²⁰ Lastly, Latinas face limited access to education, hindering their ability to secure higher-paying opportunities and remain in the workforce. According to 2022 data, Hispanics represented the lowest percentage (20%) compared to other racial groups (e.g., White: 41.8%; Black: 26.6%; Asian: 59.3%) in obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher (age 25 and older).²¹

Latina/Hispanic women also must navigate social and cultural norms that stereotype their responsibilities to be the main caretaker and out their family first.¹⁸ When Latinas uphold these values, it makes it difficult to achieve work-family balance. As Latinas may face tremendous cultural pressures to make caregiving their top priority, finding a balance between these responsibilities and their career is likely challenging.

Nevada Workforce Issues

Nevada is among six states where more than 25% of the workforce comprises Hispanic/Latinx individuals.²² In the specific context of Nevada, women represented 55.7% of the labor force in 2022.⁹ Additionally, Hispanic women/Latinas constituted 61.1% of the labor force participation. The earnings of women in Nevada amount to approximately 88.4% of their male counterparts. For example, full-time working women in Nevada earned a median weekly income of \$828, in contrast to their male counterparts who earned \$937.23. Although, median weekly earnings of women to men ratio have increased from 2020 (79.8%), women in Nevada are still earning less than their male counterparts. However, policies that work towards closing this gap is the implementation of salary range transparency laws. In 2021, Nevada's law went into effect where the employers were required to share the salary range for a position, promotion, or transfer.²⁴ For applicants, this can be shared after an interview. These policies are crucial for ensuring a reduction in pay secrecy and promoting negotiation efforts.

Nevada's job openings have decreased compared to those in 2021. Specifically, in July 2022, there were 110,000 job openings, whereas in 2023, this number dropped to 91,000.²⁵ In Reno, the primary occupational group in employment is transportation and material moving jobs, with a mean hourly wage of \$21.07. The highest mean hourly wages were occupational groups such as management (\$56.14), healthcare practitioners and technical roles (\$51.00), and legal professions (\$49.83).²⁶ In the Las Vegas area, the more common occupational group is food preparation and serving related employment. The mean salary for this group is \$14.85 in

comparison to the highest mean hourly wage of \$59.65 for the legal occupational category.²⁷ Hispanic and Hispanic and Latinas are often employed as maids/housekeeping cleaners, chefs and cooks, and custodians.²⁸ When comparing the highest-paying occupational groups in Nevada, a notable disparity emerges between the current occupations and earnings of Hispanic women/Latinas and those of higher earners in the state. The issues of inequality in education and economic growth persist in Nevada, as higher-paying positions typically demand greater educational attainment.

Recommendations for Nevada

The Equal Pay Act and the White House recent efforts have shown support to achieve pay equity. Some of these efforts include working with states legislators to expand pay transparency and extending initiatives to facilitate women's entry into nontraditional occupations.²⁹ Similarly, Latinas in Nevada require enhanced economic stability and an improvement in the quality of the employment positions they hold. We provide three recommendations for reducing the gender pay gap and supporting Latinas in the workforce to succeed in Nevada. First, additional advocacy for expanding current state and federal legislations that strengthen equal pay laws. Legislators should push for transparency in pay reporting among organizations to identify and address disparities and encourage companies to conduct regular pay equity audits to identify and resolve wage gaps.

Second, several issues during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the lack of flexible work policies among women from certain sectors. Thus, advocacy for flexible work arrangements to accommodate the diverse needs of women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities is necessary.

Companies should be encouraged to adopt family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave, regardless of occupational group. Lastly, further educational opportunities among Latinas is needed. Increase access to education and professional learning programs that can

lead to higher-paying job opportunities for Latinas is at the forefront of their advancement.³⁰ Organizational sponsorship for women pursuing careers in fields where they are underrepresented is vital to ensure Latinas have opportunities to pursue careers with higher paying wages.

Implementing these recommendations requires collaboration between Nevada policymakers, businesses, and advocacy groups. By addressing the multifaceted nature of the gender pay gap, progress can be made in narrowing the disparities faced by Latina women in Nevada and across the United States.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this fact sheet highlights the persistent gender pay gap among Latinas in Nevada, shedding light on a concerning disparities that currently exist regarding racial, maternal, and gender biases that Latinas experience. Despite various initiatives that have played a role in narrowing the gap, the data highlights the need for comprehensive policies to address both gender and racial wage gap issues. One noteworthy initiative contributing to this progress is the increasing awareness and advocacy for pay transparency. A couple of states, including Nevada, have adopted a salary range transparency law.²⁴ Future policies supporting pay transparency are needed to reduce gender and racial wage gaps.

Closing the gender pay gap for Latinas in Nevada requires a multifaceted approach that involves legislative action, corporate accountability, educational initiatives, and continued advocacy. Through ongoing commitment to policy development, implementation, and evaluation, Nevada can pave the way in dismantling the structural inequalities that perpetuate the gender pay gap.

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For feedback, partnerships, or further information, contact us at latino-center@unr.edu. We invite your generous contribution towards our work.



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