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BLS Spotlight on Statistics: Women at Work

Bureau of Labor Statistics

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BLS Spotlight on Statistics: Women at Work

Abstract

[Excerpt] At the start of the 20th century, only a handful of career opportunities were available to women, including domestic service, teaching, and some factory work. Since the 1970s, women's labor force participation and educational attainment have risen markedly. Women now work in a much broader array of fields. Although women's earnings have risen compared with men's, differences remain. This Spotlight on Statistics examines these changes and other measures of women in the workplace. The Spotlight looks at how women spend their time and money, the nature of fatal work injuries, and labor force projections for the future.

Keywords

women, work, gender, pay equality, labor force participation, education

Comments

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MARCH 2017

Women At Work

At the start of the 20th century, only a handful of career opportunities were available to women, including domestic service, teaching, and some factory work. Since the 1970s, women’s labor force participation and educational attainment have risen markedly. Women now work in a much broader array of fields. Although women's earnings have risen compared with men’s, differences remain. This Spotlight on Statistics examines these changes and other measures of women in the workplace. The Spotlight looks at how women spend their time and money, the nature of fatal work injuries, and labor force projections for the future.

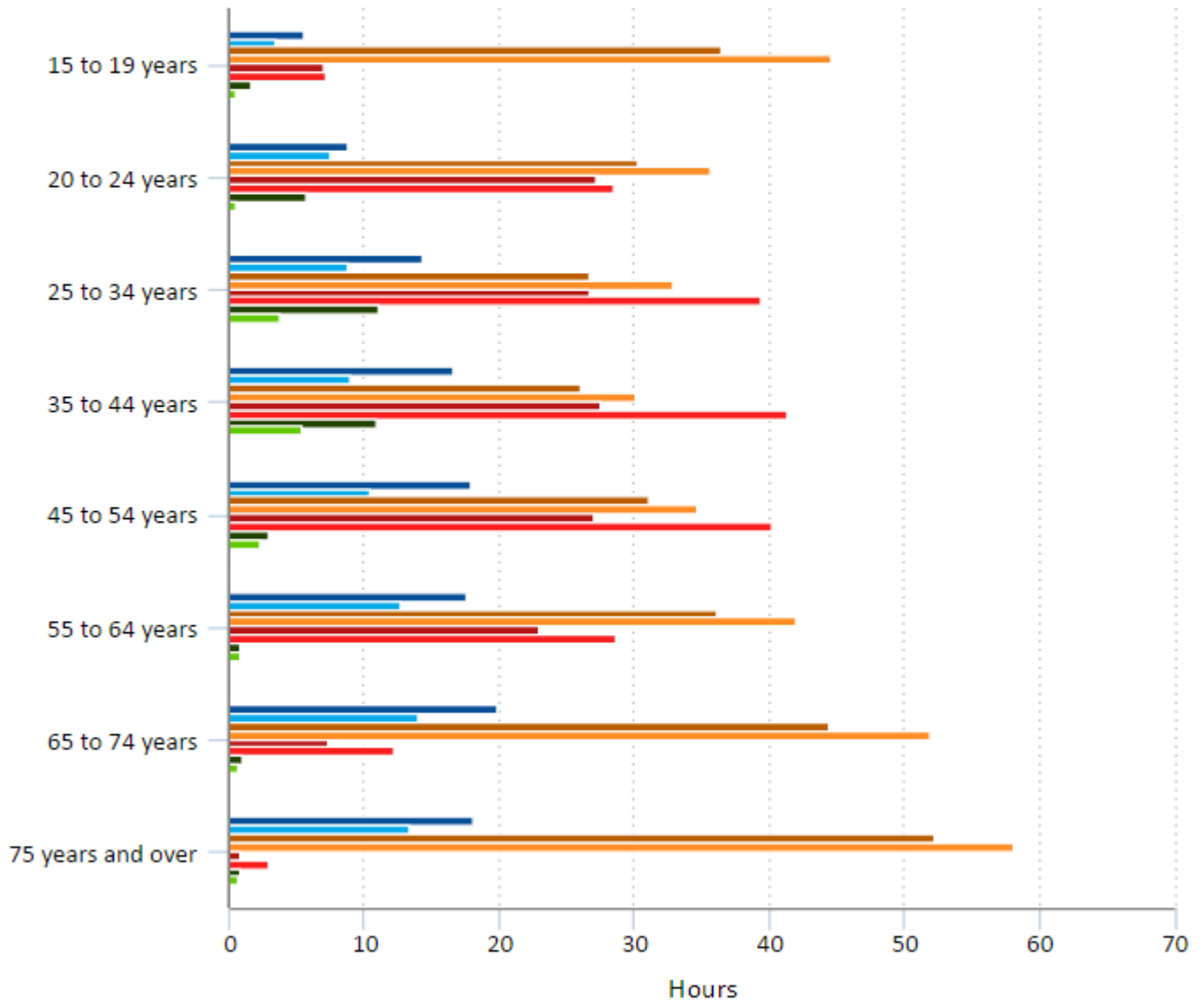
How Women and Men Spend Their Time, 2015

Women ages 15 to 54 spent more time than men caring for and helping household members, much of which involved providing childcare. Of those ages 25 and older, women spent more time than men doing household activities such as cleaning house, preparing meals, and doing laundry, while men spent more time doing paid work. At all ages, men spent more time than women in leisure and sports activities.

Time for all activities includes travel related to the activity.

Average hours per week women and men spent in selected activities by age, 2015

- Household activities, women
- Leisure and sports, women
- Work and related activities, women
- Caring for household members, women
- Household activities, men
- Leisure and sports, men
- Work and related activities, men
- Caring for household members, men



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Note: Time for all activities includes travel related to the activity.

Average Annual Spending by Single Women

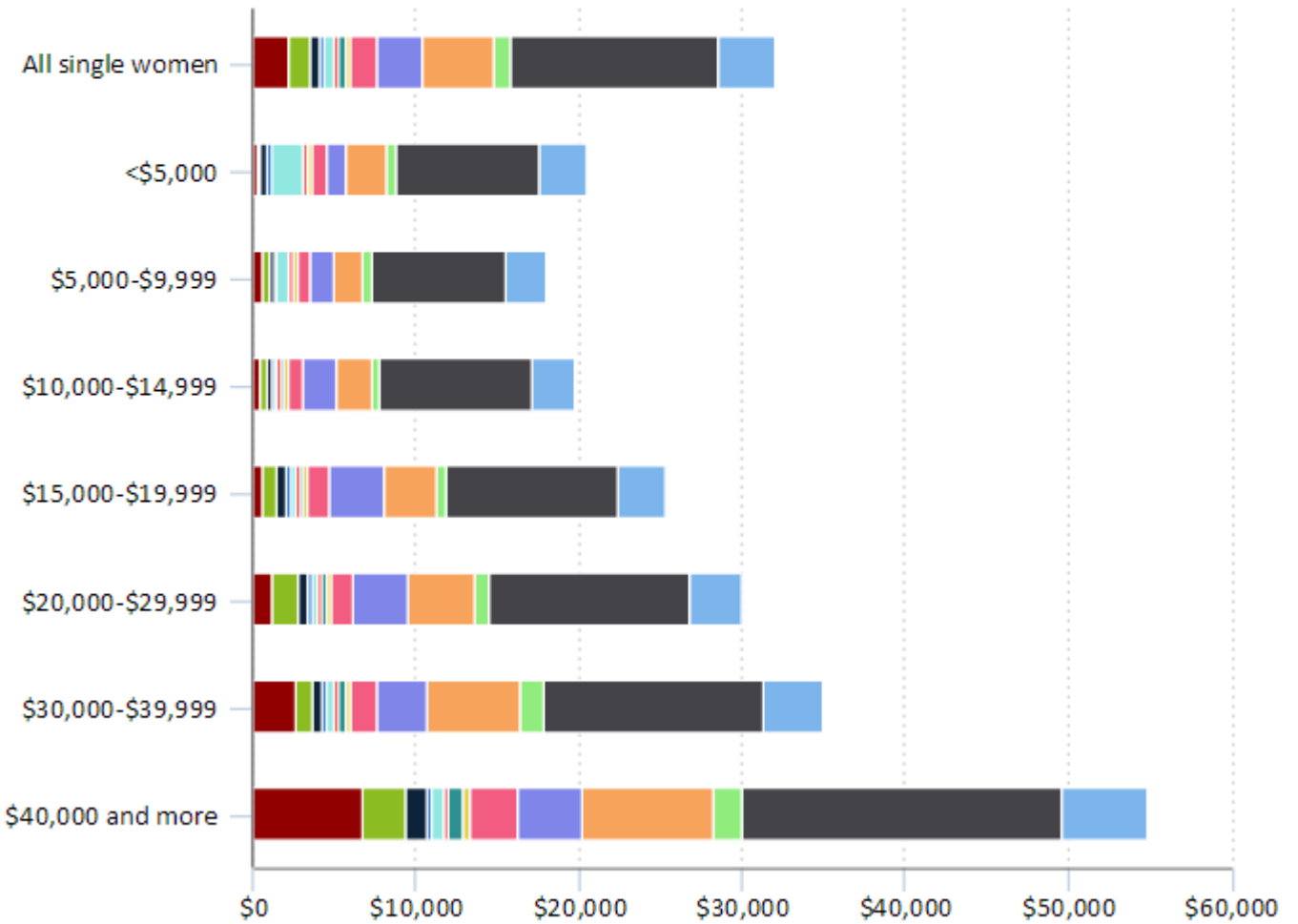
Housing accounted for an average of 39.4 percent of total spending by single women in 2014-15, making it their largest spending category. Single women with incomes of \$40,000 or more spent 35.7 percent of their budget on housing, a smaller share than single women with lower incomes.

Food accounted for 11.2 percent of total spending by single women in 2014-15. As with housing, single women with higher incomes spent a smaller share of their budget on food than did single women with lower incomes.

Personal insurance and pensions accounted for 6.9 percent of total spending by single women in 2014-15. Single women with incomes of \$40,000 or more spent 12.2 percent of their budget on personal insurance and pensions. That compares with 7.4 percent among single women with incomes from \$30,000 to \$39,999 and less than 4.0 percent among single women in income groups below \$30,000.

Average annual spending of single women, by income before taxes, 2014–15

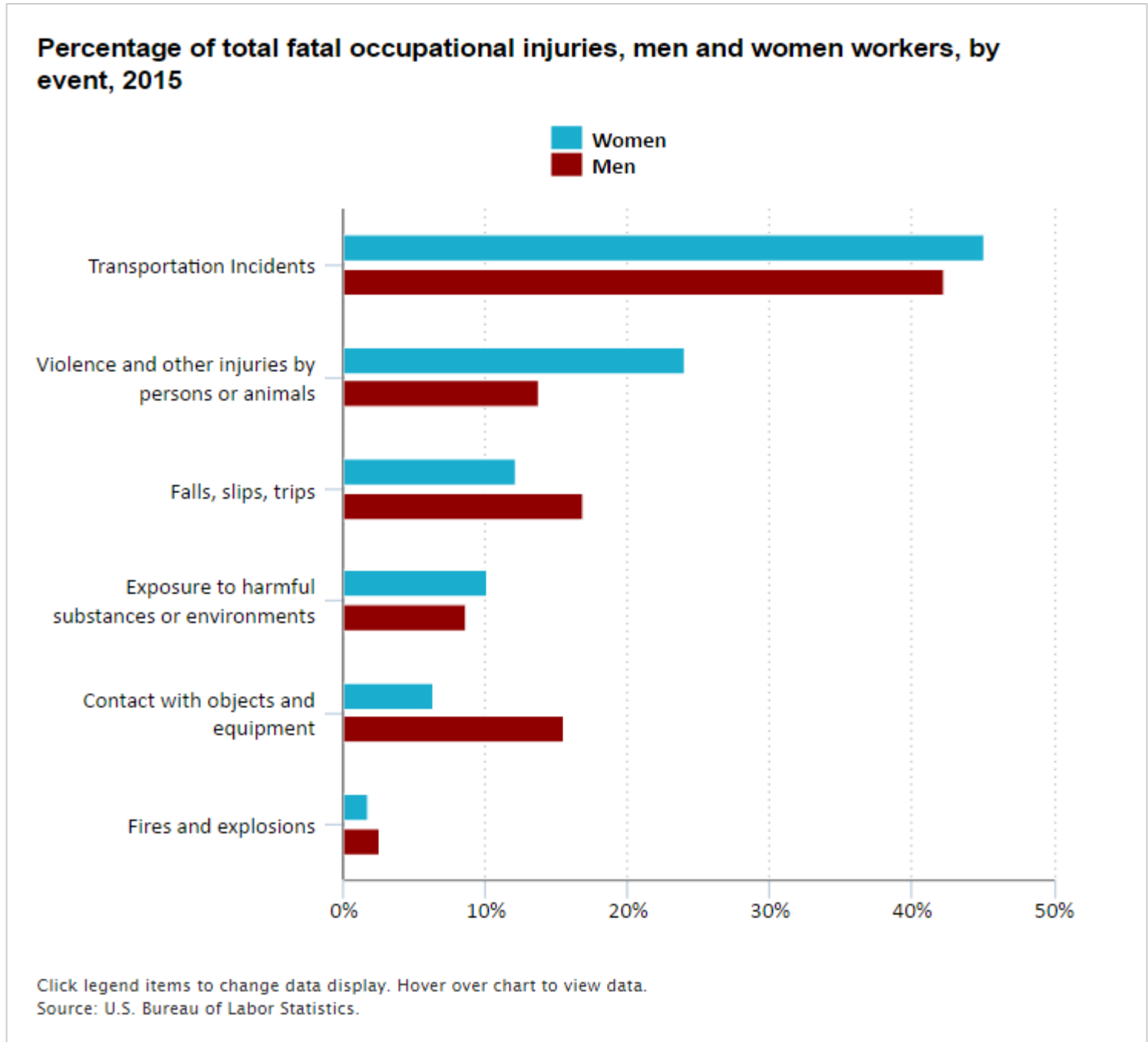
- Personal insurance and pensions
- Cash contributions
- Miscellaneous
- Tobacco products and smoking supplies
- Education
- Reading
- Personal care products and services
- Alcoholic beverages
- Entertainment
- Healthcare
- Transportation
- Apparel & services
- Food
- Housing



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.
 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Fatal Work Injuries

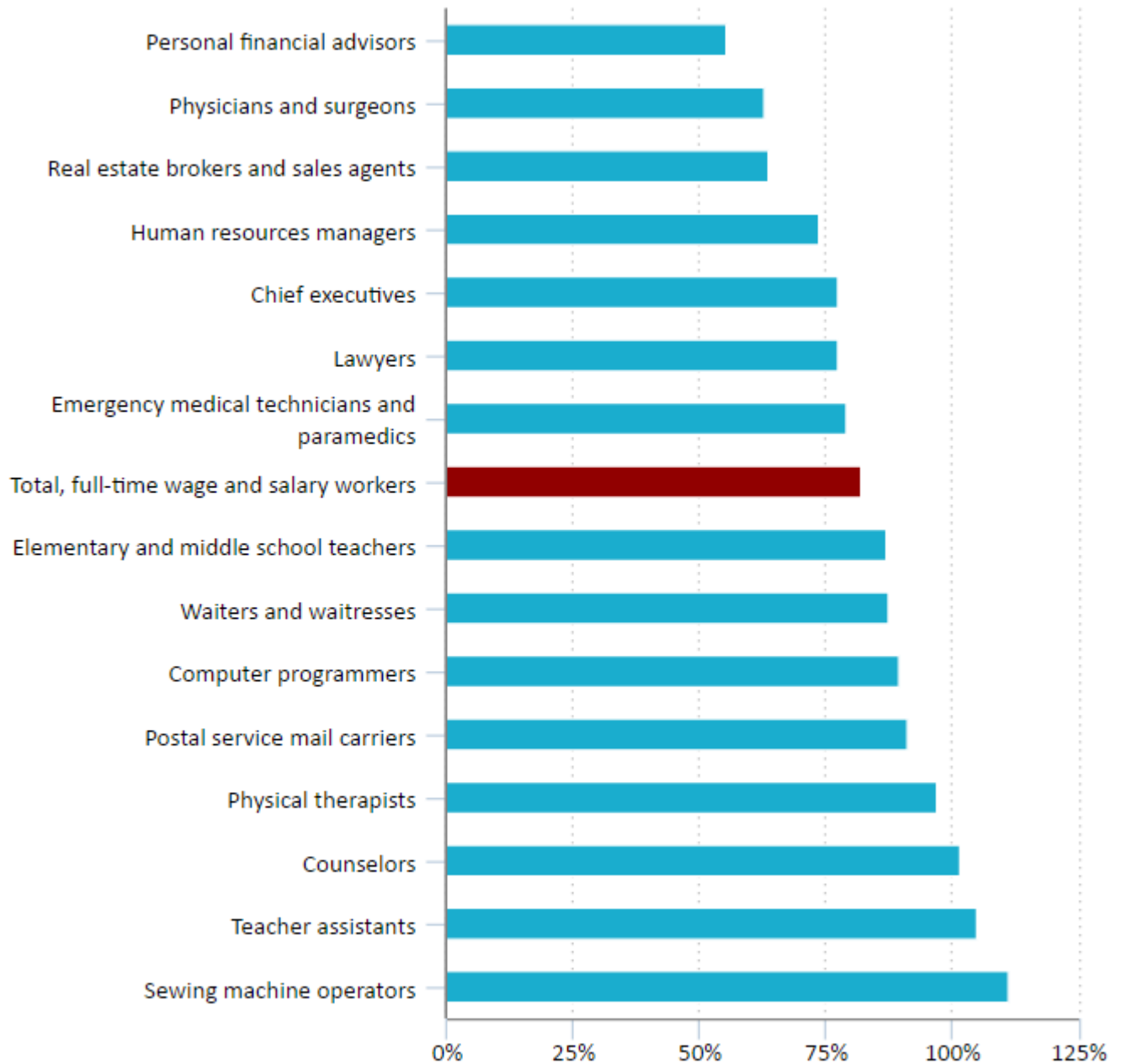
In 2015, 4,836 fatal work injuries were reported in the United States—4,492 men and 344 women. Transportation incidents were the leading cause for both women (45 percent) and men (42 percent). These include incidents on roadways and incidents involving aircraft, rail, and water transportation. Violence and other injuries by persons or animals caused 24 percent of fatal occupational injuries to women; the second most common cause of fatal work injuries to men was falls, slips, and trips (17 percent).



Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings by Occupation

The ratio of women's to men's median weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary workers in all occupations was 81.9 percent in 2016. The ratio varies by occupation. The ratio is lower among personal financial advisors, physicians and surgeons, real estate brokers and sales agents, human resource managers, and chief executives, among others. Women's median earnings are higher than men's in a few occupations—sewing machine operators, teacher assistants, and counselors.

Ratio of women's to men's median weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary workers, selected occupations, 2016



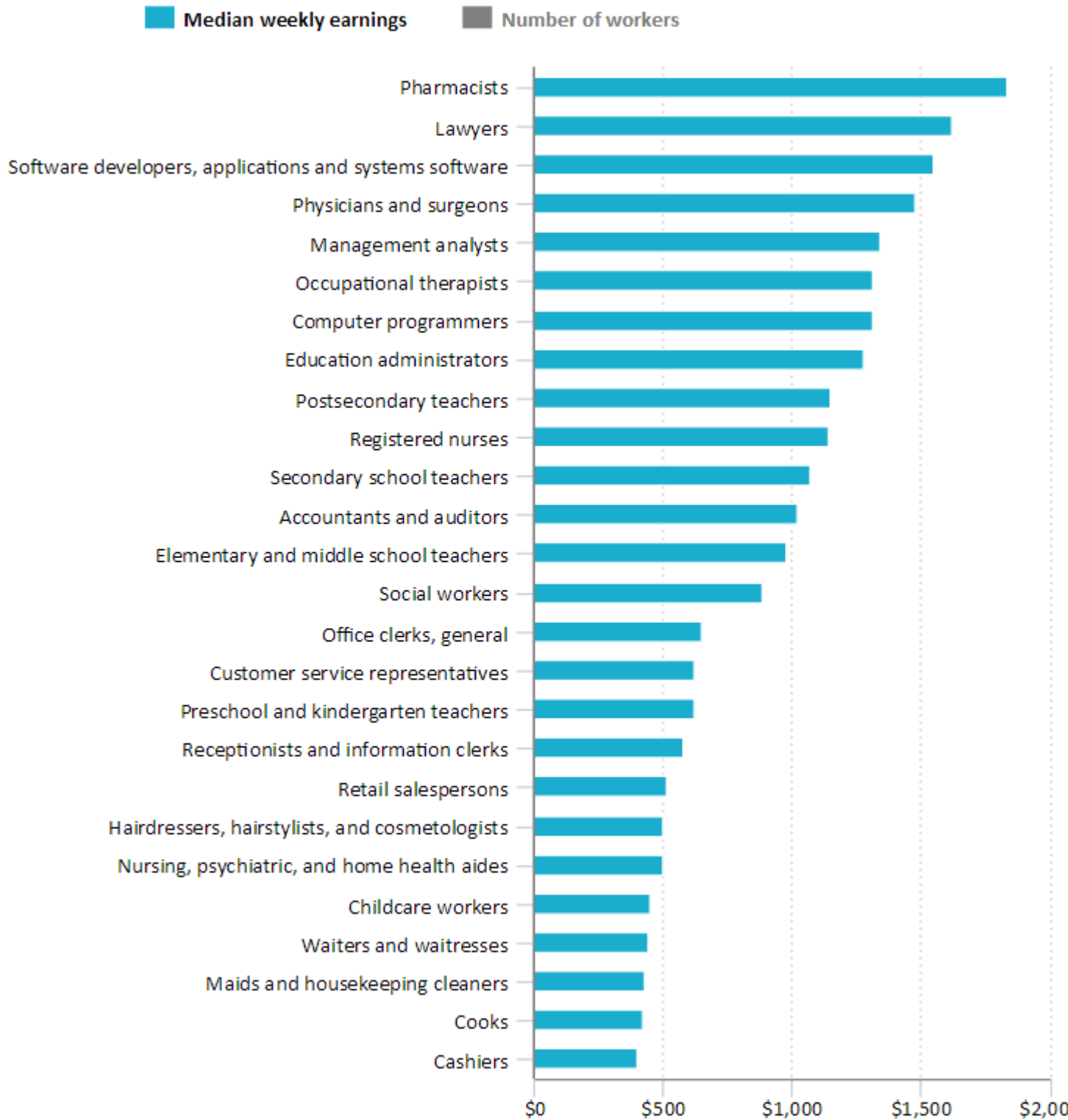
Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Women's Earnings and Employment by Occupation

In 2016, there were more than 49 million women who were full-time wage and salary workers. Their median weekly earnings were \$749. The median is the midpoint of earnings from lowest to highest; half the workers earn less than the median and half earn more. Occupations with the highest median weekly earnings for women were pharmacists (\$1,839 per week, 133,000 women employed), lawyers (\$1,619 per week, 299,000 women employed), and software developers (\$1,553 per week, 266,000 women employed). Among the occupations with the lowest median weekly earnings for women were cashiers (\$403 per week, 965,000 women employed), cooks (\$421 per week, 515,000 women employed), and maids and housekeeping cleaners (\$427 per week, 661,000 women employed).

Median weekly earnings and employment of women who are full-time wage and salary workers, selected occupations, 2016



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.
 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

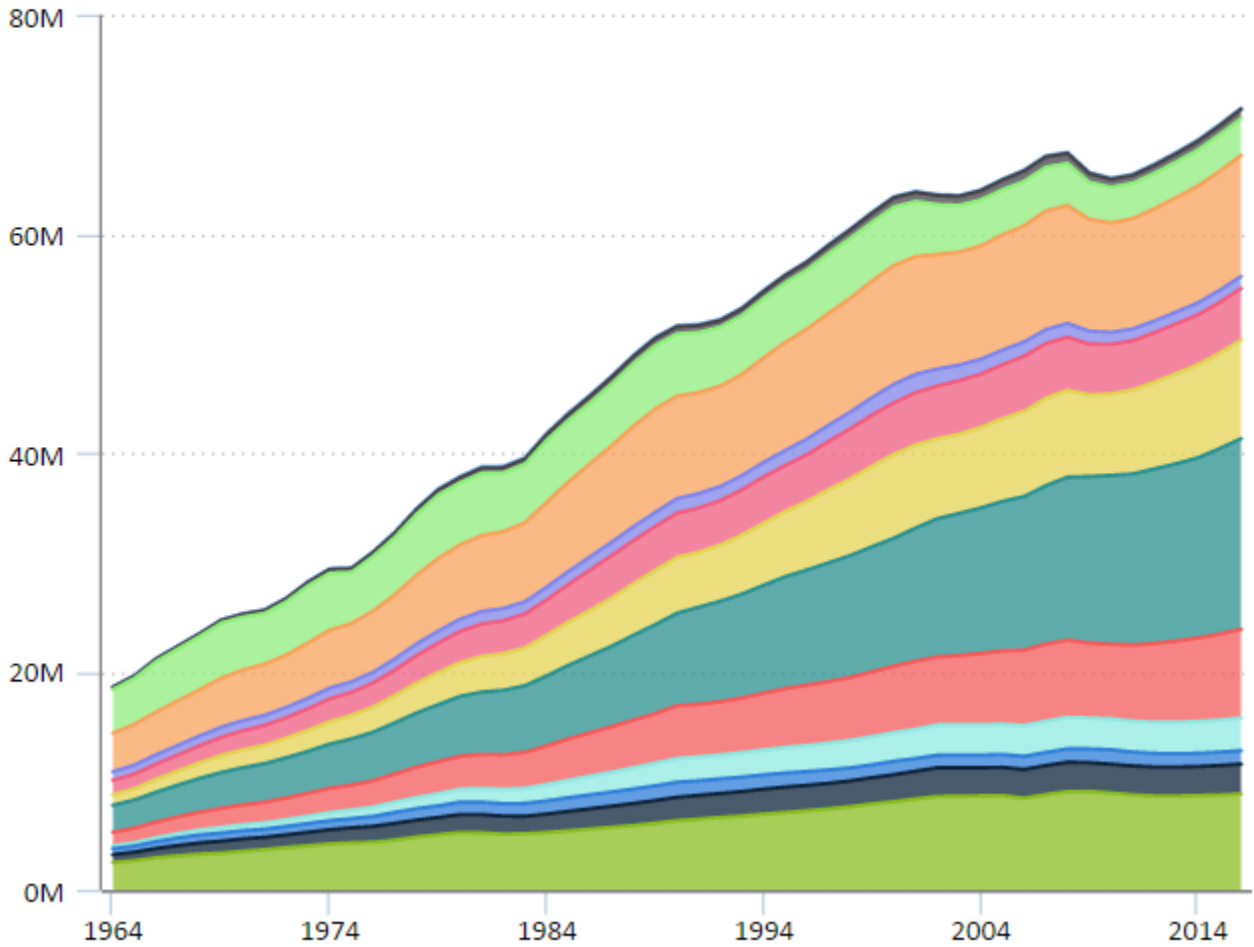
Employment by Industry

The top four industries employing women in 1964 were manufacturing; trade, transportation, and utilities; local government; and education and health services. Manufacturing had been the largest employer of women until 1974. Starting in that year, more women worked in trade, transportation and utilities than in manufacturing. Women working in private education and health services surpassed the number working in manufacturing by 1981. The number of women employed in manufacturing has declined steadily from its mid-1979 peak. By the end of 2016, manufacturing was ranked seventh in employment of women.

Meanwhile, trade, transportation and utilities is now the second largest employer of women. Although the industry surpassed manufacturing in 1974, education and health services became the largest employer of women in 1992. Trade, transportation, and utilities and education and health services employment of women has grown steadily since 1964.

Employment of women, by Industry, 1964–2016

- Mining and logging
- Manufacturing
- Information
- Professional and business services
- Leisure and hospitality
- Federal Government
- Local Government
- Construction
- Trade, transportation, and utilities
- Financial activities
- Education and health services
- Other services
- State Government



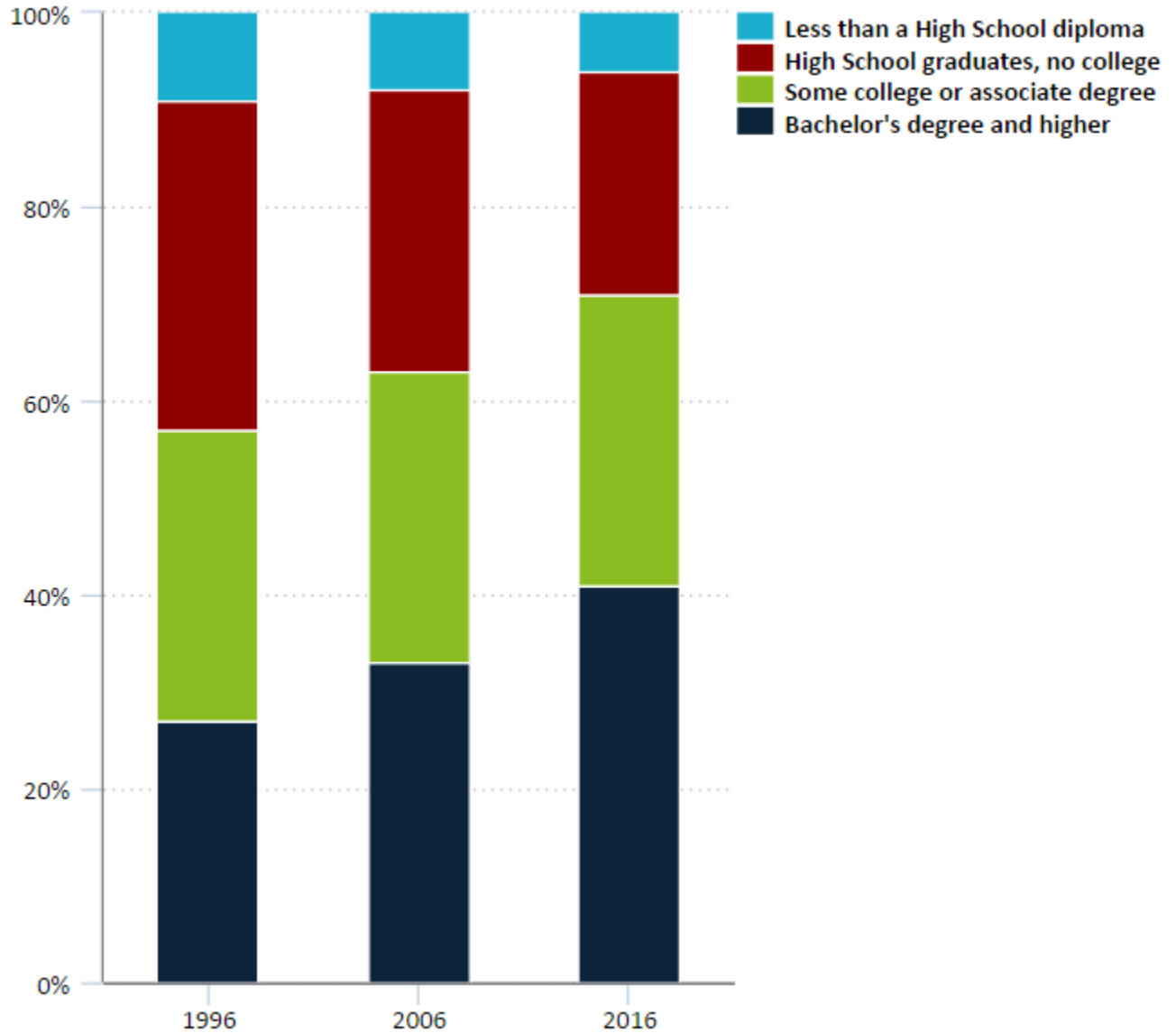
Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Labor Force by Educational Attainment

In 1996, 27 percent of women age 25 and older in the civilian labor force had earned a bachelor's degree and higher. Twenty years later, that figure increased to 41 percent of women in the labor force. The percentage of women in the civilian labor force with less than a high school diploma has declined from 9 percent in 1996 to 6 percent in 2016. Although the number of women in the civilian labor force who have some college or associate degree has increased slightly, their share of the labor force from 1996 to 2016 remained at 30 percent.

Percent distribution of women age 25 and older in the civilian labor force by educational attainment, 1996, 2006, and 2016



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Labor Force Projections

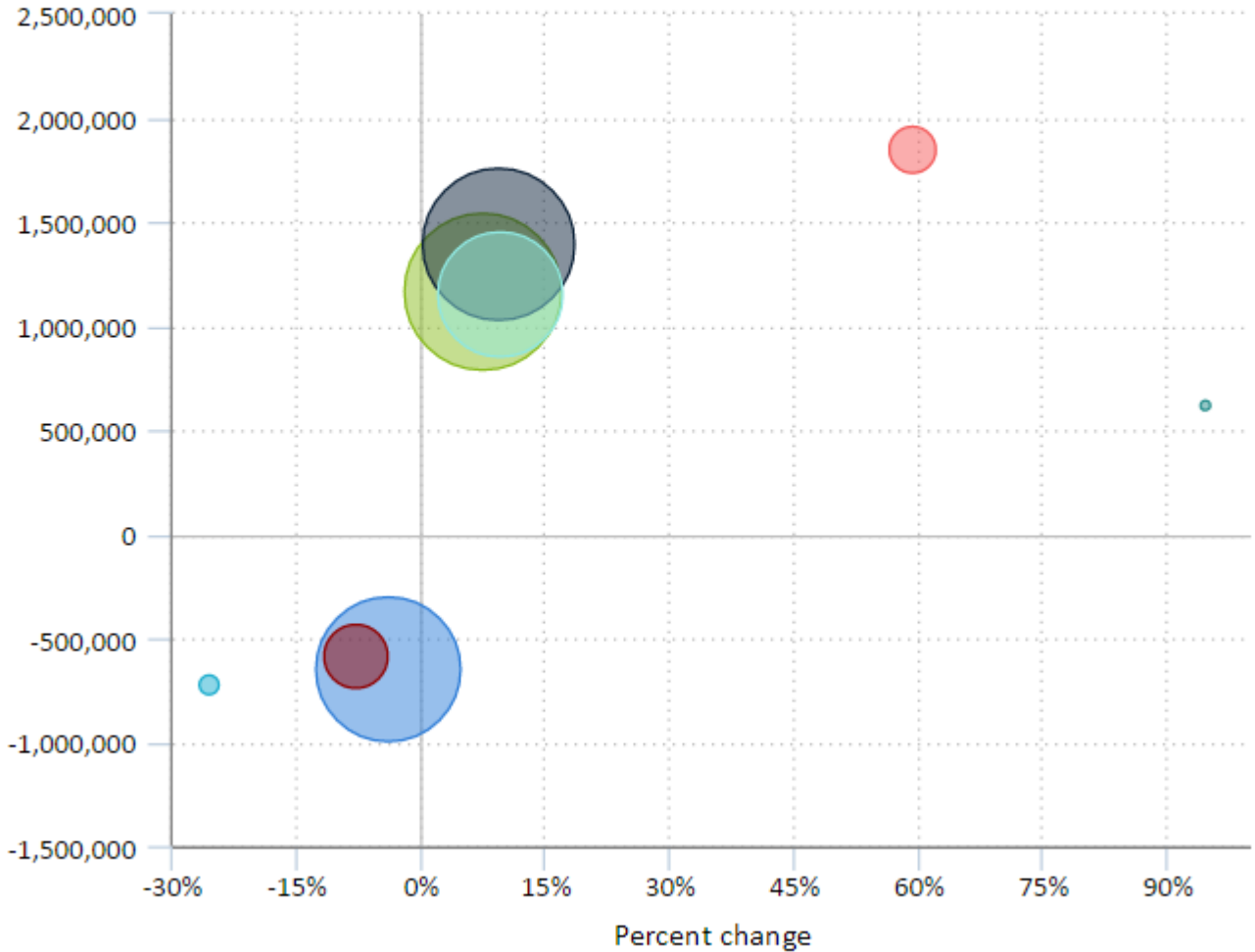
From 2014 to 2024, the civilian labor force of women is projected to grow 5.8 percent, or 4,207,000. The largest percentage change in the civilian labor force is expected to come from women aged 75 and older, with an increase of 94.5 percent or 618,000. The number of women ages 65 to 74 is projected to grow 59.2 percent, or 1,846,000. Declines are projected for women ages 16 to 19, 20 to 24, and 45 to 54.

Projected change from 2014 to 2024 in the labor force of women, by age

Bubble size represents projected 2024 labor force size

- 16 to 19
- 20 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 and older

Change in level



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.
 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

More information

The data in this Spotlight on Statistics are from six BLS programs.

- The data in slide 2 are from the [American Time Use Survey](#).
- The data in slide 3 are from the [Consumer Expenditure Survey](#).
- The data in slide 4 are from the [Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities](#) program.
- The data in slides 5, 6, and 8 are from the [Current Population Survey](#).
- The data in slide 7 are from the [Current Employment Statistics](#) survey.
- The data in slide 9 are from the [Employment Projections](#) program.

The estimates of time use shown in slide 2 are averages for the civilian noninstitutional population. These averages include people who are employed and those who are not employed.

The estimates of consumer spending in slide 3 focus on single women rather than all women. Data from the survey reflect spending by all members of a household, rather than each individual, so limiting the analysis to single women shows spending choices that are women's choices, rather than spending decisions that may involve multiple people in other household types.

More data visualizations about women are available from [The Economics Daily](#).