

A Study of the Disparity in Wages and  
Benefits Between Men and Women in Wyoming

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was conducted during late 2002 and early 2003, in response to the Legislature's request to study wage disparity between men and women in Wyoming.

Women earn less on average than men: globally, nationally, regionally, and in Wyoming. Wyoming's gap in wages between the genders is the highest in the region, in part because Wyoming men make more than the regional average and Wyoming women make less. It is, of course, illegal to pay men and women different wages for doing the same job under the same circumstances. Benefits for women working full time in Wyoming were found to be the same as for men working full time, but more women work part time than men, and the level of benefits is less for part time work than for full time.

National and international research has identified reasons why women typically earn less than men. The reasons are:

- Different occupations/jobs held by men and women
- Time spent at work
- Education differences
- Employment in different industries
- Other factors including children and discrimination

The impact on Wyoming of the disparity in wages was found to be large and to include: the larger than average need for women to hold multiple jobs, higher childcare costs, lost income for families, higher job turnover, increased human capital out-migration, etc. It is estimated that the costs to Wyoming's economy exceed benefits by \$65 million annually.

Census data from the 2000 Federal census was used in Study I to identify the specific variables in Wyoming that most affect the disparity in wages. The industries in which women work, lower participation in full time work, education, and experience (age) are the variables most associated statistically with the increased wage gap in Wyoming.

Study II – a telephone survey of a random sample of Wyoming households provides examples and first hand information from residents on the perceived reasons and impacts associated with wage disparity. The results track closely with what the statistical analysis of the census data found.

Possible solutions (tried elsewhere) are presented along with examples of “best practice” private firms that have implemented some of the solutions. The solutions also include possible government and individual approaches along with the private industry suggestions.

Further, a list of (unevaluated) ideas for dealing with wage disparity in Wyoming is presented, covering a wide spectrum. Three of these ideas, however, are subjected to cost/benefit analysis and their impact on Wyoming's wage disparity is calculated. The three are:

- What would happen to wage disparity if more women went into nontraditional (for women) occupations in Wyoming?
- What would happen to wage disparity if the wages in Wyoming were brought to the national average for two traditionally female jobs: teachers and nurses?
- What would happen to wage disparity if more women worked full time?

These three were selected because they provide benchmarks against which some of the other ideas could be compared. The conclusion attempts to put wage disparity in Wyoming in the context of what was discovered in the research.