

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
WOMEN'S BUREAU
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**DIFFERENCES IN THE EARNINGS
OF WOMEN AND MEN**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary
WOMEN'S BUREAU
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OF WOMEN AND MEN

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,
WOMEN'S BUREAU,
Washington, September 1, 1937.

MADAM: I have the honor to transmit the results of an inquiry made by this Bureau into the differences in the wages of women and men. The findings show a striking uniformity in the extent to which women's wages are below men's, in spite of changes in the general wage level, in business conditions, or in source of labor supply, and regardless of locality, type of industry, period of time, method of pay, or other qualifying factor.

The timeliness of presenting information on this subject is indicated especially in the fact that any low-wage group constitutes a menace to wage standards in general, and also in the fact that the low wages women receive further emphasize the necessity of extending such minimum-wage measures as now are operating in nearly half the States.

The Women's Bureau, throughout its entire existence, has sought in many ways to develop more adequate standards of wage payments to women. The present study represents another step in the continuation of such efforts.

The collection and preparation of material here presented was the work of Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, chief of the Research Division, who wrote the report. Field work for sections of the study was done by Ethel L. Best, industrial supervisor, assisted by Catharine R. Belville, and by Ethel Erickson, industrial supervisor.

Respectfully submitted.

MARY ANDERSON, *Director.*

HON. FRANCES PERKINS,
Secretary of Labor.

WOMEN RECEIVE MUCH LOWER PAY THAN MEN

This is generally true regardless of date, industry, type of occupation, method of pay, or other qualifying factor.

In three States that have reported men's and women's wages over some 12 to 20 years, women's average wages in manufacturing almost always have been less than 60 percent as great as men's. (For details, see p. 46.)

Women's average earnings are considerably below the average of the bare entrance rates of men for common labor in the same industries. (For details, see p. 41.)

Certain recent reports show that the average wages of women office workers ordinarily are at least one-fifth below those of men (though the discrepancies are less in the more skilled types of work). In States that have reported wages of men and women clerical workers over a series of years, women in office work have received only about 50 to 60 percent as much as men. (For details, see p. 16.)

Women in occupations requiring considerable skill or dexterity were paid less than men in the least skilled jobs in plants making seamless hosiery, men's work clothes and shirts, knit underwear, paper boxes, men's suits and overcoats, candy, and bakery products. (For details, see p. 39.)

In only 3 of 18 manufacturing occupations compared were men and women receiving the same hourly pay. Most of the women were paid only 35 cents or less an hour, though some of their jobs required a considerable degree of dexterity or expertness, and though in almost no case did any man reported in the plant, no matter in how unskilled a job, receive less than 40 cents an hour. (For details, see p. 27.)

Recent reports of salespersons' wages show many more women than men at the lower pay levels, and many men but few women at the higher levels. (For details, see p. 23.)

In occupations in plants manufacturing men's clothing and seamless hosiery, though in some cases women's maximum earnings were higher than men's and a number of women earned more than any man, yet larger proportions of women than of men usually were found in the very low pay ranges. (For details, see p. 26.)