



Wider Opportunities for Women

Women and Nontraditional Work

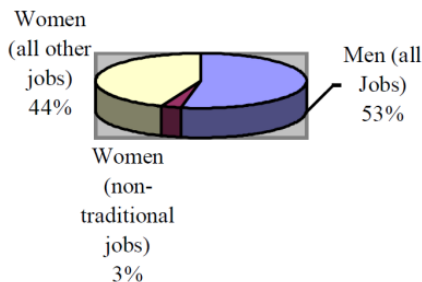
The U.S. Department of Labor defines nontraditional occupations for women as those jobs in which women make up less than 25% of the total number of workers.

In 2008, 68 million women were employed; 4.2 million women (5.8% of all working women) were employed in nontraditional occupations.

Occupational Categories	Total # of Workers (in thousands)	# of Women in Nontrad. Jobs (in thousands)	Examples
Managerial, Professional	52,761	1,764	Engineer Programmer
Sale, Office Occupations	35,544	58	Couriers Salespersons
Service	24,451	648	Police, Barber
Natural Resources Construction	14,806	504	Carpenters Auto Mechanic
Production Transportation	17,800	1,186	Pilot Machinists
Total	145,362	4,160	

Between 1988 and 2008, the number of women in nontraditional jobs remained relatively unchanged at around 3% of the total number of employed workers.

Total Workforce, 2008



Equal proportions of working Black, White and Hispanic women are employed in nontraditional jobs.

Who works in Nontraditional Jobs?

- 5.7% of Employed Black Women
- 6.0% of Employed White Women
- 6.0% of Employed Hispanic Women*

Who works in traditionally Female+ Jobs?

- 47.0% of Employed Black Women
- 42.7% of Employed White Women
- 45.1% of Employed Hispanic Women*

Women in Traditional jobs typically earn 20-30% more than women in traditional occupations.

Women in Traditionally Female+ Jobs	Women's Median Weekly Pay	Women in Traditionally Male Jobs
License Prac. Nurse	\$679	\$731 Police/Sheriff's Patrol
Receptionist	\$502	\$515 Metalworker
Childcare Worker	\$393	\$542 Truck Driver
Textile Sewing Machine Operator	\$383	\$430 Butcher

Even when women work in the same occupations as men, they still do not earn equal pay.

Occupation	Women's Wages	Men's Wages	Women's Earnings as a % of men's
Truck Driver	\$542	\$709	76.4%
Computer Programmer	\$1,003	\$1,261	79.5%
Correctional Institution Officer	\$605	\$725	83.4%
Filling Machine Operator	\$401	\$501	80.0%



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Women in nontraditional jobs look like women in traditionally female jobs. Overall, differences in race, ethnicity, and age are minimal.

Characteristic	% of all women Nontraditional	% of all Women Traditional+
Black	11.8%	13.8%
White	79.1%	79.8%
Hispanic Origin*	11.7%	12.5%
Under 35 Years	29.7%	32.0%
35 years or older	69.3%	50.0%

* "Hispanic origin" is a separate category from race. The Hispanic category includes people of any race; the White and Black categories may include people who self-identify as Hispanic.

+ Traditionally female jobs have over 75% female workers.

In the past decade, women have made progress in professional, male-dominated jobs, but have made very few gains in nontraditional occupations.

Over the past decade, the greatest increase in the number of women working in nontraditional jobs has been in the managerial and professional occupations.

Percent Female

Managerial/ Professional Occupation	1988	1992	2004	2009
Civil Engineer	7.3%	8.5%	11.7%	10.4%
Lawyer	19.3%	21.4%	33.5%	36.0%
Physician	19.9%	20.5%	31.2%	32.2%
Physicist	7.1%	11.1%	--%	--%

Most working women (60.5%) work in jobs that are not in the management or professional category. Yet, gains in those jobs are nonprofessional and nontraditional have been minimal over the past decade.

Percent Female

Nonprofessional Occupation	1988	1992	2009
Electrician	1.4%	1.2%	2.5%
Truck Driver	4.3%	4.6%	3.7%
Telephone Installer	12.1	10.5%	12%
Automobile Mechanic	0.7%	0.8%	1.6%

Why Would a Woman Want a Nontraditional Job?

Nontraditional Jobs pay more- 20 to 30 percent more- than traditionally female jobs.

Workers in installation, maintenance, and repair occupations can earn a median \$644 weekly salary. As opposed to counter and rental clerks where women are more concentrated earn a median \$496 weekly salary.

Nontraditional jobs can give women greater satisfaction by expanding career opportunities.

Just like men, women's interest and abilities are diverse. By expanding the number of jobs women enter, women are likely to find closer "occupational fit" with their skills and personalities.

Nontraditional jobs tend to have established career ladders- so women can work their way up to higher wages and better benefits.

A telecommunications-installer earns a median wage of \$16 an hour but can earn up to \$29 per hour. Good health, education, and vacation benefits are common in the occupation.

Nontraditional jobs offer better benefits than traditionally female jobs. Many are unionized.

Nontraditional jobs in the trades and technical fields often come with better health benefits, sick leave and paid vacation than do traditionally female jobs.



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How Should a Woman Get Started?

Consider the various opportunities in nontraditional work:

- Professional workers at supervisory or planning level often require a high level of education such as engineers or architects.
- You can secure a Technician or Site Supervisor job such as in building, surveying, maintenance, with on the job experience
- You can get a job in the construction trades including bricklaying, carpentry, plastering, and plumbing with a certificate rather than a two or four year degree.
- It is important to begin with a course that lays the right "foundation" for your career. There are many opportunities available including women-only courses for those who feel more comfortable. Mixed- classes are also available for those who want to prepare for the work environment.
- Make sure you are clear on the work schedule and conditions so there are no surprises when you start your job.
- You may be able to access assistance in paying for training as well. Be sure to do some research for all opportunities available to you.

Barriers

Women have been slowly gaining entry into historically nontraditional jobs. However, there is still work to be done to even the field and eliminate barriers. It is important to understand the barriers as well as the strategies for which to overcome barriers. The benefits of nontraditional jobs for women often outweigh the challenges.

Social/Cultural

- **Family and Friends May Not Be Supportive** – Many women find that family and friends are not supportive about their new career choices. Despite this, women can find many support groups and networks to continue in their chosen careers.
- **Sense of isolation** – With limited women on the job, women may feel a sense of isolation or not "fitting in" at their worksite. This sense of isolation can decrease as more women join the field and nontraditional employees become familiar with their coworkers and their coworkers become familiar with them. Women's support networks and groups can reduce isolation as well.
- **Because women are scarce in nontraditional jobs**, women entering into the field lack female role models.

Education and Training

- **Women and girls often have limited information about nontraditional occupations**- Limited experience with tools and mechanical operations and women and girls being steered away from classes where they would learn to use and repair tools and machinery compound the negative impacts of them accessing nontraditional jobs. Women and girls are too often simply not directed toward classes that are considered nontraditional.
- **Women are often socialized into traditional female roles** - Women are often not informed of careers that may lead them to more nontraditional choices such as not historically being directed into classes that are "nontraditional" such as math and science. Limited access to on-the-job training



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and apprenticeships all add up to women's absence in higher paying nontraditional jobs.

- **Lack of support services such as child care and transportation** – Women remain primarily responsible for family needs such as family care arrangements. Non-traditional jobs can be at odd times and locations making transportation and child care difficult to find and maintain.
- **Education and training system does not promote nontraditional employment for women** – less than 16 percent of female Workforce Investment Act "exiters" receive training, and less than one percent enter into jobs that are nontraditional for women".

Sexual Harassment

- **Women in nontraditional jobs or training are at greater risk of sexual harassment.** - Unwelcome behaviors can include teasing, jokes, remarks and questions; deliberate touching; letters, telephone calls or material of a sexual nature; pressure for sexual favors; sexual assault.
- **Sexual harassment is against the law** - Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act has been interpreted through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines of 1980 as prohibiting sexual harassment.
- **Employers can be held liable for sexual harassment.**
 - 1986 Supreme Court case established the right to seek legal remedy under Title VII (*Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*).
 - 1991 Supreme Court ruling stated that the display of sexually explicit materials in the workplace can constitute sexual harassment (*Robinson v. Jacksonville Shipyards*).

- 1998 Supreme Court cases found employers liable for Supervisors who sexually harass their coworkers (*Burlington Industries Inc. v. Ellerth* and *Faragher v. City of Boca Raton*.)
- **Women can take specific steps when faced with sexual harassment.**
 - Tell the harasser to stop the offensive behavior.
 - Document all incidents of harassment.
 - Notify your supervisor, union representative or other appropriate person of the harassment.
 - Know your company or school policy on sexual harassment and follow its procedures.
 - Consider filing a formal grievance of complaint if the above steps do not remedy the situation.
 - Stay on the job.
 - Find support from family, friends or other groups to help you through the situation.
 - The first step can be to contact the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission regarding the complaint http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual_harassment.cfm
Offices are located in every state <http://www.eeoc.gov/field/index.cfm> (202) 663-4900.

Strategies to overcome barriers must focus on changing institutions and providing individual support to women.

Institutional Change

- Teachers, counselors, and program administrators can be trained to support access of women and girls to high-wage training and employment.
- Program elements can be altered to address increasing the number of women recruited,



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trained and placed in nontraditional jobs into all public training programs.

- Incentives are available for training programs and employers that meet or exceed their goals for training and placing women and girls in nontraditional jobs.
- Better collaboration among WIA, vocational education, welfare, apprenticeship and training, unions, and sex equity programs, and between employers and enforcement personnel can better promote women's entry into nontraditional jobs.
- Policies change all the time, it's important to monitor local and state expenditures and policies for job training and vocational education to see that adequate support exists for training women and girls in nontraditional careers.
- Establishing new and protecting existing legislation at the federal and state level designed to increase women's participation in high-wage, high-demand jobs is critical.
- Ensuring funding streams such as the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) Act continue to provide concentrated efforts promoting the recruitment, hiring, training, and retaining of women in apprenticeships and nontraditional occupations.

Institutional Support

- Women need career counseling that includes career and wage information tied to role models in their chosen field.
- Pre-vocational training, such as tool identification and physical conditioning must be a part of program curriculum.
- Women and girls should be trained in the "survival skills" necessary to work in male-dominated jobs, including how to handle sexual harassment.

- Support groups and mentoring programs for women and girls in nontraditional jobs or training programs should be a part of education and training efforts as well as a part of on-the-job support.
- Employers and unions play a central role in preparing the workplace to successfully receive and retain women in nontraditional jobs.
- Women and girls should be educated about the wages necessary to be self-sufficient and how nontraditional jobs can provide income to help meet their needs today or, as adults.

Sources

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