

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-106320](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

Research has shown that women in the U.S. workforce earn less than men and face challenges in advancing their careers. For example, in 2022, GAO reported that women were underrepresented in management positions. GAO was asked to further assess disparities for women in the U.S. workforce, including women's representation and pay by industry.

This report examines (1) women's representation in management positions, by industry, and the key characteristics of women and men in these positions; (2) differences in pay between women and men, by industry, for managers and non-managers; and (3) how pay differences between women and men vary based on key characteristics, for managers and non-managers.

GAO analyzed the U.S. Census Bureau's record-level American Community Survey (ACS) data from 2018, 2019, and 2021 (the most recent data available at the time of GAO's review). GAO did not analyze ACS data from 2020 because they were not sufficiently reliable due to data collection challenges early in the COVID-19 pandemic. To analyze pay differences, GAO used average pay for full-time, year-round workers. Because the ACS is a sample survey, all results presented in this report are estimates. All differences in this report are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level, unless otherwise noted. GAO's analysis is descriptive, and neither confirms nor refutes the presence of discriminatory practices. GAO did not control for any variables, including those that would be expected to affect pay and representation, such as hours worked beyond full time.

View [GAO-23-106320](#). For more information, contact Thomas Costa at (202) 512-4769 or costat@gao.gov.

March 2023

WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

Underrepresentation in Management Positions Persists, and the Gender Pay Gap Varies by Industry and Demographics

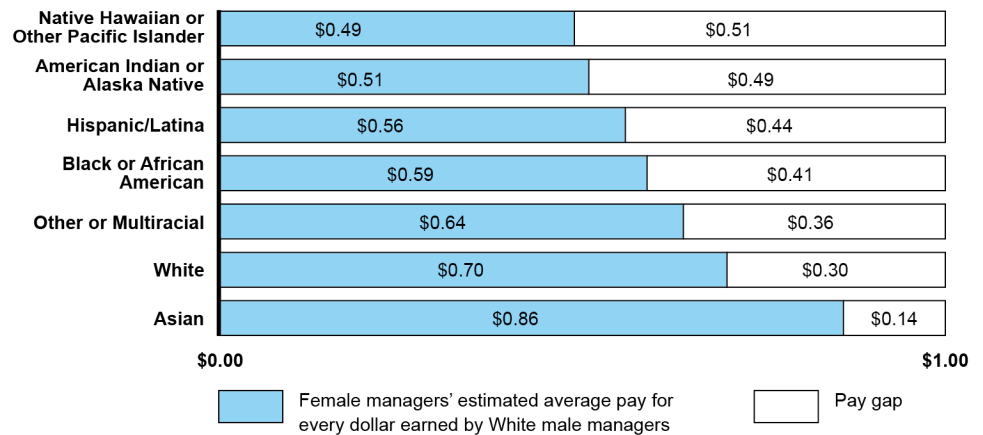
What GAO Found

In recent years, women remained underrepresented in management positions in most industries, and female and male managers had different demographic characteristics, according to GAO's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. For example, GAO estimated that in 2021, across all industries combined, 42 percent of managers were women, which was less than the percentage of women in non-management positions (48 percent). However, women's representation in management positions increased slightly, by less than 2 percentage points, between 2018 and 2021. In addition, in 2021, female managers were more likely than male managers to be under age 40 and have at least a bachelor's degree. Female managers were also less likely than male managers to be White, married, or have at least one child in their household.

GAO found that the gender pay gap varied widely across industries, and was greater for managers than non-managers, in recent years. In 2021, women working full time earned an estimated 76 cents for every dollar that men earned, on average, across all industries combined. Women's pay by industry ranged from an estimated 57 cents on the dollar in the Health Care and Social Assistance industry to 93 cents on the dollar in the Construction industry. Across all industries combined, the pay gap was greater for managers than for non-managers (an estimated 71 cents and 77 cents on the dollar, respectively).

GAO also found that the gender pay gap was greater in recent years for women with certain demographic characteristics. Among full-time managers in 2021, the pay gap varied considerably across racial and ethnic groups. For example, for every dollar earned by White men, on average, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander women earned an estimated 49 cents, and Asian women earned an estimated 86 cents. In addition, the pay gap was greater for female managers who were age 40 and older, had at least a bachelor's degree, were married, and had at least one child in their household. These findings were similar for women who were not managers.

Full-Time Female Managers' Estimated Average Pay for Every Dollar Earned by Full-Time, White Male Managers, by Race and Ethnicity, 2021



Source: GAO analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) data. | GAO-23-106320