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# Hot Jobs Update: 2008 Outlook for Maine's Women Workers

This paper on the occupational outlook for Maine's women workers is intended as an update to the Bureau of Labor Education's previous briefing papers on this topic.<sup>1</sup> These earlier papers showed that despite many upbeat analyses of the best "hot new jobs" that will be available to women workers in the next decade, the largest occupations available to women workers in Maine will continue to be primarily jobs with low wages and little economic security. What do more recent data suggest about these issues?

## **Employed Women, Economic Insecurity, and Maine's Occupational Projections for 2014**

In 2007, 61.3 percent of Maine women were in the paid labor force (down from 63.9 percent in 2000), compared to 71.4 percent of men (down from 74.4 percent in 2000).<sup>2</sup> Among full-time workers, Maine women earned 76.7 cents for every dollar earned by Maine men in 2006.<sup>3</sup> Maine ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for both women and men's median earnings (among full-time, year-round workers) for 2006: at \$30,338 for women, and \$40,116 for men.<sup>4</sup> Nationally, a comparison of median weekly earnings among full-time workers shows that women earned 81 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2006.<sup>5</sup>

While employed women and men face many similar challenges in the changing global economy, women workers continue to have additional obstacles, such as lower pay or salaries on the whole (even within similar occupational categories), discrimination and harassment, and greater responsibility for childcare and household work (the "second shift"). The work patterns of women with children—greater part-time work, part-year work, and career interruptions—are also associated with less access to health benefits, pensions and unemployment benefits. Access to affordable and quality childcare and health insurance remains a critical issue for many, and paid family leave is not the norm in the U.S.

Nearly two out of five women in the U.S. work in jobs paying low wages, which are not likely to offer health insurance benefits, and may result in living near or under the poverty level.<sup>6</sup> Will the majority of Maine's women workers face a similar reality over the next few years—that of widespread economic insecurity due to low-paying jobs? Or will numerous "hot jobs" offering women better options for economic independence open up in the near future?

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<sup>1</sup> Available on the Bureau of Labor Education's (BLE) website at: <http://dll.umaine.edu/ble/pubs.htm>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (US DOL/BLS), *Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment*, "Employment status of the civilian non-institutional population in states by sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and detailed age (preliminary)," 2007 Annual Averages (and 2000 Annual Averages); <http://www.bls.gov/lau/ptable14full2007.pdf> (Maine, 2007: PDF page 22). The 2007 labor force percentages for the U.S. as a whole were 59.3 percent for women, and 73.2 percent for men. (2000 Annual Averages: BLE, *ibid.*)

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Labor (US DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); *Highlights of Women's Earnings in 2006*; September 2007; "Table 3: Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by state and sex, 2006 annual averages;" Report 1000, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpswom2006.pdf>, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *American FactFinder: Ranking Tables*; R2001, "Median Earnings for Male Full-Time, Year-Round Workers;" R2002, "Median Earnings for Female Full-Time, Year-Round Workers;" [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GRTSelectServlet?ds\\_name=ACS\\_2006\\_EST\\_G00\\_&\\_lang=en&\\_ts=220287475704](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GRTSelectServlet?ds_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00_&_lang=en&_ts=220287475704), *Income* section.

<sup>5</sup> US DOL/BLS, *ibid.*, p. 1. Women's median weekly earnings, for full-time workers, were 80.8 percent of men's.

<sup>6</sup> Marlene Kim, "Women paid low wages: who they are and where they work." U.S. Department of Labor (US DOL) and Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), *Monthly Labor Review*, September, 2000; pp. 26-30. People "working in service occupations, retail trade, agriculture, and personal-service industries are likely to receive low wages," according to Kim.

Table One lists the 20 largest projected occupations for Maine women workers in 2014, along with 2006 average wages. This table was constructed for this briefing paper, based on state occupational projections for 2014 for all Maine workers, and the percentage female in 2000 for these occupations in Maine.<sup>7</sup> The Bureau's 2003 study of the twenty largest occupations projected for Maine women for 2008, showed five occupations that paid a 2001 living wage of \$13.67 in 2000, for a family with two parents (only one of whom works for pay) and two children. Currently, for the 2014 projections, only *two* of the largest projected occupations, Registered Nurse and Elementary School Teacher, paid a 2006 livable wage of \$16.47, as of 2006, for the same family profile.<sup>8</sup> If wages for these occupations remain the same relative to the cost of living, most Maine women are unlikely to see any major improvements in their financial outlook in the foreseeable future.

**TABLE ONE: 20 Largest Projected Occupations for Women Workers, Maine, 2014**

Rank	Occupation	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
		Projected Total Employment, ME 2014	Percent Female, ME 2000	Estimated Female Employment, ME 2014	Average Maine Wage, 2006
1	Registered Nurses	16,613	93.8	15,583	\$26.47
2	Cashiers	17,240	79.6	13,723	8.58
3	Retail Salespersons	21,003	53.8	11,300	11.75
4	Office Clerks, General	12,850	85.3	10,961	11.06
5	Waiters and Waitresses	12,134	86.6	10,508	9.44
6	Combined Food Prep & Serving	13,203	78.7	10,391	8.06
7	Secretaries, except Legal/Medical/Executive	9,850	96.7	9,525	13.18
8	Nursing Aides, Orderlies and Attendants	10,285	90.0	9,257	10.63
9	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	9,103	90.3	8,220	14.19
10	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	9,147	88.7	8,113	9.10
11	Teacher Assistants	8,291	90.2	7,479	25,830 <sup>9</sup>
12	Child Care Workers	7,430	93.6	6,955	9.99
13	Customer Service representatives	9,724	71.1	6,914	13.14
14	Personal and Home Care Aides	7,656	85.0	6,508	9.07
15	Elementary School Teachers, except Special Ed.	6,642	77.2	5,128	42,420
16	Social and Human Service Assistants	5,189	90.0	4,670	11.44
17	Home Health Aides	5,044	90.0	4,540	10.14
18	Food Preparation Workers	7,283	61.5	4,479	9.32
19	First Line Supervisors/Managers of Retail Workers	10,345	43.0	4,448	16.04
20	Receptionists and Information Clerks	3,841	91.6	3,518	10.94

**Sources:**

Column 1: ME DOL/LMIS, <http://www.maine.gov/labor/lmis/pubs.html>; "Maine Employment Outlook to 2014," p. 13.

Column 2: [http://maine.gov/labor/Labor Statistics/Labor Market Analysis/Demographics/US Census Labor Force/Statewide](http://maine.gov/labor/Labor%20Statistics/Labor%20Market%20Analysis/Demographics/US%20Census%20Labor%20Force/Statewide).

Column 3: BLE calculations; multiply (column 1 \* column 2).

Column 4: US DOL/BLS, Occupational Employment Statistics (OES); <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes-me.htm>

It is clear from these data that most Maine women will not be able to find work in high-paying, desirable "hot jobs." If one explores the occupational data on the most desirable higher wage and fast growing

<sup>7</sup> These 2000 census data provide the most recent data available for Maine occupational breakdowns by gender.

<sup>8</sup> Maine Center for Economic Policy, *Livable Wages and Family Support*; (follow link to *Maine State Average*); <http://www.mecep.org/lw.asp>

<sup>9</sup> The hourly wage rate for Teacher Assistants in Bangor, ME ranged from \$12.52 to \$15.37 in March, 2008, according to the Bangor School Superintendent's Office (3/4/08, personal conversation).

“hot jobs” that individual women may aspire to, two things become clear. First, with the notable exception of registered nurses, the highest paying jobs in Maine tend to have few annual job openings, particularly for women (see Table Two). Secondly, the highest-paying and fastest-growing “hot” occupations which are at least 50 percent female often require a substantial investment in advanced education, such as physician assistants and medical/clinical lab technologists.<sup>10</sup> Hence the ready information on hot jobs for some women workers doesn’t reflect the reality that most women will find themselves in jobs that are not so great, from an economic perspective.

**TABLE TWO: Highest Paying Maine Jobs  
with 70 or More Projected Annual Job Openings, 2004-2014**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	(1) <u>Projected Annual Job Openings, ME 2004-2014</u>	(2) <u>Percent Female, Maine 2000</u>	(3) <u>Projected Annual Job Openings for ME Women*</u>	(4) <u>Average ME Wage, 2006</u>
1	Registered Nurse	568	93.8	533	\$26.47
2	General & Operations Managers	325	25.3	82	40.30
3	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing, excluding technical	202	19.7	40	24.47
4	Accountants & Auditors	90	57.7	52	24.69
5	Insurance Sales Agents	80	57.4	46	26.03
6	First Line Supervisors, Mech/ Install/ Repair	76	6.1	5	23.46
7	Financial Managers	74	55.6	41	35.04
8	Lawyers	73	26.7	20	42.97

\* Assuming that the proportion of women in each occupation remained constant based on ME 2000 data.

**Sources:** See Sources for Table One. (1) ME DOL/LMIS, “Highest Paying Jobs In Maine;” (list includes the 100 highest paying jobs). (2) ME DOL/LMIS -- 2000 Census (ibid.); (3) BLE Calculations: (Column 1 \* Column 2); (4) US DOL/BLS OES (ibid.)

Additional information on the economic status of Maine’s working women is also available from a recent report, “Working Women in Maine,” published by the Women’s Employment Issues Committee of the Maine Jobs Council.<sup>11</sup> The report’s economic “benchmarks” are based largely on 2005 data. For example, this report states that:

- In 2005, nearly half of Maine women earned less than \$20,000, compared to 32 percent of men.<sup>12</sup>
- Women accounted for 45.9% of all unemployed persons in Maine in 2005.<sup>13</sup>
- 14.3% of Maine women lived in poverty in 2005, compared with 10.8% of men.<sup>14</sup>
- More than 25% of women aged 18- 24 years in Maine were living in poverty in 2005.<sup>15</sup>
- Maine ranks highly among states in the percentage of women with health insurance coverage.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> ME DOL/LMIS “Publications and Presentations” (<http://www.state.me.us/labor/lmis/pubs.html>) Brochures/ “Hot Jobs in Maine;” ME DOL/LMIS “Occupational Projections for 2014;” and the BLE’s 2003 “Hot Jobs,” BLE, ibid. Two examples of relatively high-paying “hot” occupations which are more than fifty percent female and don’t necessarily require a four-year college degree are dental hygienists and paralegals.

<sup>11</sup> Maine Jobs Council, Women’s Employment Issues Committee; “Working Women in Maine: Indicators for Progress, 2007;” Winter, 2007. Maine Jobs Council: [www.maine.gov/labor/mjc](http://www.maine.gov/labor/mjc)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 9. Since these ACS data are based on all workers with earnings (age 16 and over), this large difference can be explained in part by the fact that women are more likely to work part-time than men. (For Maine in 2005, 52.8% of women in the labor force worked part-time, while 38.6% of men were part-time workers. Ibid., p. 12).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 10. This calculation is weighted by the labor force participation rate.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

As in the rest of the U.S., Maine's women workers are underrepresented in many "nontraditional" occupations that pay decent wages. One of the policy recommendations from the "Working Women in Maine" report is to "offer and strengthen programs that educate women and girls" about opportunities in such occupations, as well as training, "in order to support a gender integrated workforce." It is important, suggests the report, that both young women and men be able to envision a "fuller range of life options for themselves."<sup>17</sup> Adopting the state's livable wage estimates as a standard for economic security (rather than the federal poverty level) is another recommendation in the report.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, the lack of adequate family support services has a disproportionate impact on women workers, who are likely to have a hard time paying for childcare, and/or finding adequate childcare for what they can afford. Recommendations brought forward in the Maine Jobs Council's report on "Working Women in Maine" address these needs thoroughly and eloquently:

Recognize, initiate, and institutionalize child and family care services through every available avenue, and ensure that every worker who needs these services can access affordable, high quality programs that ensure their ability to hold a job. . . . **The idea that dependent care is an individual responsibility, rather than a social responsibility, must be changed.** . . . Eventually, systems that institutionalize child and family care as an economic development strategy and workforce necessity will be the touchstone of financial progress for all working parents, particularly women. Children, people with disabilities, and elders will benefit immeasurably as well. In addition, affordable health insurance is an adjunct to family care that supports workers and their families.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusions

Women workers clearly face special challenges. As noted previously, the "second shift," which includes household, personal care and parenting duties, disadvantages women in the workplace. Because of their extra responsibilities, women are more likely to work part time, which means that they too often do not receive benefits such as health insurance. In addition, they are more likely to have interruptions or breaks in their work experience, reducing both their longevity with employers and their earnings. As the "Working Women in Maine" report points out, many women workers are likely to face poverty in old age because of lifelong gender inequalities in income and earnings.<sup>20</sup>

For all of these reasons, policy makers, educational institutions, employers, unions, community organizations and citizens must continue to explore innovative solutions to the economic insecurity challenges which will continue to face large numbers of Maine's women workers. Ultimately, the long-term economic sustainability of the state depends on developing adequate and creative programs and opportunities to support Maine's workers and families.

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*A member of the University of Maine System*

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<sup>16</sup> Maine ranked among the top ten states in 2004-2005 in the percentage of women with health insurance coverage. In 2005, 68% of Maine women had private/employer insurance coverage, and 20 percent had public insurance. Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 35; emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 34.