2012 ACTION BOOK

The latest on the economic and social wellbeing of women in our community.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS
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The latest on the economic and social wellbeing of women in our community.

With thanks to the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and Wells Fargo, partial underwriters of Women’s Summit research.

APRIL 13, 2012
This Action Book is the culmination of two years of research by the Women’s Summit on Women, Wages and Work. It represents the efforts of a multidisciplinary research team and our research committee that includes community members and university faculty and staff from a variety of sectors and disciplines.

We hope that the 2012 Action Book will prove to be the source of inspiration, paving the way for dialogue about the ways in which equity in the workplace in terms of wages, training and development, promotion and opportunities is good for ALL employees—both men and women and is ultimately good for the bottom line of employers, too.

This Action Book is dedicated to the children of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. May the communities of your futures cherish and nurture your unique talents and capabilities.

Lisa Yarrow, Director

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Women’s Summit
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Welcome to the 2012 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Women’s Summit conference. This Action Book, prepared for the conference, contains a collection of data and research that supports actionable items to help improve the status of women in Mecklenburg County. In an effort to ensure integrity and enhance the value of the findings and recommendations, The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Women’s Summit has collaborated with multiple departments within UNC Charlotte to undertake this research. Recommendations include increasing educational attainment for women, enhancing partnerships between women and various public and private organizations, and creating better opportunities for young girls and women in Mecklenburg County. Our recommendations are driven by data and are based on our findings on the status of women in the community before, during, and after the Great Recession.

The Women’s Summit collaborated with three UNC Charlotte research entities to undertake research surrounding women’s issues over the past year. This book incorporates research completed by the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute as well as the Organizational Science and Public Policy Programs at UNC Charlotte. The findings are presented herein to inform and continue the dialogue cultivated by the Women’s Summit to improve the lives of women. Funding for this work was provided by the Women’s Summit and research grant awards.

**Women, Work and Wages**

The *Women, Work and Wages* report is part of a year-long research endeavor to examine the state of women in regard to work, wages, and the impact of the Great Recession. It is a compilation of four quarterly reports initiated by the Women’s Summit in collaboration with the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute to report on the status of women in the workplace nationwide and locally. The primary focus was looking at how women fared during and after the Great Recession in comparison to one another and their male counterparts. Noteworthy findings from this research include:

- Wage gaps increase between men and women with higher educational attainment.
- Significant earnings disparities exist between women of different races and ethnicities. White women earn significantly more than their minority peers.
- Unemployment rates for minority women far exceed those of white women.

**Understanding and Addressing Disparity in the Appointment of Women to City and County Boards in Charlotte-Mecklenburg**

The report *Understanding and Addressing Disparity in the Appointment of Women to City and County Boards in Charlotte-Mecklenburg* written by Holly Whisman, graduate student of the UNC Charlotte Public Policy Program, explores the continuing disparity in the appointment of women to City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County boards and commissions. The report also makes recommendations on ways to increase the participation of women on City and County boards. This research was funded in part by a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. Noteworthy findings from this research include:
In 2011, women made up 40 percent of the application pool for positions on boards and commissions and were appointed at approximately the same rate. Five (8.6%) boards and commissions had no women represented as members in Charlotte-Mecklenburg in 2011.

- In 2011, 11 boards and commissions had a majority of women members. Three comprised all women members.

Gender and the Career Experiences of Undergraduate Business School Alumni

The Gender and the Career Experiences of Undergraduate Business School Alumni report, written by Katherine A. Frear, Samantha Paustian-Underdahl and Lisa S. Walker from the Organizational Sciences Program, focuses on factors impacting career-related decisions and outcomes for men and women. The study looks at causes leading to gender segregation in industries, wage inequalities, and career choice motivations of alumni from UNC Charlotte. This research is intended to be an impetus for longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of negotiation skills training and career counseling for women. Noteworthy findings from this research include:

- Throughout their careers women tend to have life aspirations that are simultaneously career and family focused.
- Women reported that social networks and support from family and religion/faith helped their career advancement.
- Women said that personal characteristics, family obligations, bad work experience/lack of experience, and office politics or discrimination hindered their career advancement.

Each section of research includes recommended action items to increase equality for women. The action items were identified by the research teams after careful analysis of the compiled secondary and survey-based data. The research and recommended actions are intended to inform individuals at the conference and continued discussions about women’s issues long after. This effort is just a portion of the work related to women’s issues being done in community. It is intended to gauge where women stand in the region, identify areas where progress has been made, and most importantly, recognize disparities that women must still overcome to advance equally in work and society.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WOMEN, WAGES AND WORK REPORTS

Over the course of 2011, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Women’s Summit and UNC Charlotte Urban Institute worked in partnership to produce a series of four quarterly reports on the state of women in regard to work, wages, and the impact of the Great Recession. These reports highlight the differences between men and women in the workforce, with particular attention given to their varying levels of well-being during and following the recession. The following section summarizes some of the key findings from those reports, provides a glimpse of the disparities between men and women in the workforce, and highlights some areas for improvement and action. All four reports in their entirety follow this summary.

EARNINGS

The statistic most often cited to illustrate the disparity between men and women in the workforce is the wage gap, a simple ratio of women’s earnings to men’s earnings. Detractors aside for what the wage gap does not show, it remains an easily understood measure of earnings inequality. Most sources place the overall wage gap in the United States between 75 and 80 percent, meaning women earn 75 to 80 percent of what men earn.

Locally, Mecklenburg County’s wage gap is similar to that of the nation, while North Carolina fares slightly better. Over the past four decades, an upward trend toward equity is visible, although improvement in the wage gap has been slow at all levels in recent years. In terms of individual earnings, women in Mecklenburg County achieve higher median earnings than women in North Carolina and nationwide. Although Mecklenburg County women earn more than their peers at the state and national level, women’s earnings are significantly lower than men’s earnings in Mecklenburg County, evidenced through the wage gap statistic.

Although education is often seen as the vehicle to higher earnings, the magnitude of this effect is not as great for women as it is for men. Men’s earnings increase considerably more than women’s as they move up in educational attainment, resulting in a larger wage gap between men and women at the highest levels of attainment. In Mecklenburg County, the wage gap between men and women with less than a high school diploma is 82 percent, while the wage gap between men and women with a graduate or professional degree is 62 percent.

In addition to variations by educational attainment, earnings and corresponding wage gap statistics also differ by occupation, industry, age, and race. At the national level, many of the occupations where men’s earnings are significantly higher than women’s are higher wage occupations in finance, law, and real estate, to name a few. Occupations where women earn more than men are typically lower wage occupations in food preparation and retail operations.

Examining earnings by industry also illustrates the disproportionate allocation of high- and low-paying occupations between men and women within economic sectors. For example, the earnings gap in the healthcare industry can be, in part, explained by the unequal share of men in high paying
physician and specialist occupations, compared with the number of women in lower-paying nursing and administrative office occupations.

Also, the earnings gap between men and women is larger for older age cohorts than younger ones. One explanation for this disparity is the traditional role of women as caregivers, which often leads to interrupted periods of work and thus diminished earnings potential throughout life.

**JOBS**

Unemployment and job loss continue to be the most devastating effects of the recession and remain a persistent drag on the economy. Throughout the recession and subsequent recovery, women experienced fewer job separations than men but also fewer new hires.

During the recession men experienced job losses at greater rates than women, but this trend reversed in the post-recession period when job losses affected a larger share of women. Much of this discrepancy can be attributed to different gender representations in employment across industries and the timing of employment declines in those industries. Men are more heavily represented in manufacturing, construction, and transportation occupations, which declined at the height of the recession. Women, however, are the majority of the workforce in social service and government occupations, which experienced declines after the recession officially ended.

**Racial Disparities Among Women**

In addition to disparities between men and women, these reports found a number of disparities among women of different races and ethnicities. For example, white women earn more than their peers of different racial and ethnic backgrounds although African American women have experienced steady increases in earnings over the past five years. Also of concern, the unemployment rates for minority women far exceeded those for white women.

**AREAS FOR ACTION**

- Identify and educate on public policies that do not penalize employers for discriminating against women on the basis of gender, race and ethnicity relating to wages and benefits.
- Educate employers and employees on the Equal Pay Act.
- Improve women’s earnings by:
  - Encouraging companies to provide equal pay and benefits, leadership and on-the-job training for women.
  - Encouraging women to stay current in their field when out of the workforce.
  - Participating in on-the-job training.
- Decrease wage gap between men and women by:
  - Promoting the benefits of higher education among girls in middle and high school.
  - Preparing women to negotiate for better wages beginning with their first job.
  - Promoting higher paying occupations in male dominated industries (e.g., engineering) among women.
  - Encouraging women to advance their careers through new job opportunities in their current company or opportunities elsewhere.
• Exploring whether and to what extent discrimination in the workplace is taking place in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
• Developing frameworks to educate regarding discrimination in the workplace.

• Increase awareness of and reduce racial and age disparities by:
  • Educating employers about existing racial and age disparities in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg workforce and the economic impact of continuing disparities on the local and state economies.
  • Teaching women how to negotiate pay, benefits and work schedule when returning to the paid workforce.
  • Working with nonprofit organizations that focus on serving minority groups.
  • Working with minority affiliated groups on college campuses and in the community.
  • Working with local colleges and universities to hold workshops aimed at helping minority women prepare for and advance in the workplace.

• Using the current UNC Charlotte network by:
  • Partnering with the University’s Career Center on campus to help prepare women to present themselves in a more competitive fashion; and to ensure they are equipped to negotiate salaries and benefits when entering the workforce
  • Working with current sororities and women’s groups on campus, e.g.:
    • Association for Computing Machinery–Women (ACM–W)
    • Girl Talk University
    • Society of Women Engineers
    • Strong Women of UNCC
    • Women in Construction Club
    • Women of Worth (WOW) Network

LOOKING AHEAD

These reports clearly show that women have yet to achieve equity with their male counterparts in the workforce. However, these reports also highlight small gains women have achieved, which if continued, should result in a more equitable workplace in the future. Finally, documenting the experience of women in the workforce ensures that progress continues and is supported by appropriate employment policies and actions among women.
KEY FINDINGS

The goal of this report is to begin to understand women’s earnings in Mecklenburg County. This report gives baseline information to help appropriately frame issues regarding “Women, Wages and Work” in Mecklenburg County. This report is expected to increase awareness and drive the research agenda on how disparities in wages affect women in Mecklenburg County. Another important goal of this report is to start to determine how women in Mecklenburg County fared during the “Great Recession.”

STRENGTHS

- Overall, women in Mecklenburg County earn more than their counterparts at the state and national level.
- Overall, women in Mecklenburg County have achieved more education than their counterparts at the state and national level.
- In Mecklenburg County, women with at least some postsecondary education earn more than women with less education.
- Women working in traditionally male-dominated fields have earnings significantly higher than the median earnings for all women.

CHALLENGES

- The wage gap between men and women persists in Mecklenburg County but is very close to the national average.
- Wages for women of color lag significantly behind wages for white women.
- When educational attainment is considered, the wage gap between men and women markedly increases.
- Wages for women in female-dominated occupations lag significantly behind wages for women in male-dominated occupations.

GENDER AND WAGES

According to data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey, median earnings for both men and women working full time in Mecklenburg County exceed North Carolina and national medians each year from 2005 to 2009 (Figure 1).
While both men and women in Mecklenburg County fared better than their counterparts at the national and state levels, disparities between men and women persist. Women’s wages were significantly lower than men’s wages each year from 2005 to 2009 (Figure 2). In 2009, women earned more than $10,000 less than men, a slight improvement from 2005.

Women’s wages steadily increased from $34,171 in 2005 to $38,926 in 2007, an overall increase of 13.9 percent during that time, but decreased the following two years to $37,768 in 2009. Men’s wages followed the same general trend as women’s wages, but on average men were paid more, increasing 9.6 percent from $45,048 in 2005 to $49,351 in 2008 and then decreasing 2.6 percent in 2009 to $48,063. On a positive note, wages for women increased at a greater rate than for men from 2005 to 2009, with a 10.5 percent overall increase for women, compared with 6.7 percent for men.
Another way to express the difference in wages between men and women is the wage gap, which is the ratio of women’s earnings to men’s earnings. For example, a wage gap of 0.75 indicates that women earn 75 cents to every dollar men earn. Women’s wages are closer to those for men as the ratio increases. From 2005 to 2009, Mecklenburg County’s wage gap was similar to the national wage gap, with the exception of 2007, when it was a notable five points higher (Figure 3).

Figure 3

![Wage Gap Chart](image)

<table>
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<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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</table>

Source: US Census American Community Survey

Little progress has been made in the United States in closing the wage gap. North Carolina’s wage gap was closer to pay equity from 2005 to 2009, compared with Mecklenburg County, except for 2007 when the wage gap in Mecklenburg County was slightly better. From 2006 to 2007 the median earnings for women in Mecklenburg County rose 8.6 percent ($3,068), compared with men’s median earnings that increased 2.4 percent ($1,123). Mecklenburg County’s wage gap improved from 0.76 in 2005 to 0.82 in 2007 but returned to a more consistent upward trend in 2008 (0.78) and 2009 (0.79).

RACE, ETHNICITY AND WAGES

In addition to gender wage differences, variations exist among women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Figure 4). Some variations between different races and ethnicities are more pronounced than others.

White women in Mecklenburg County had the highest earnings of any race, with median earnings ranging from $40,073 in 2005 to $45,703 in 2007. African American women in Mecklenburg County had the second highest earnings among racial groups, experiencing a slight but consistent earnings increase from $29,212 in 2005 to $32,939 in 2009. Asian women earned slightly less than African American women from 2005 to 2009, while earnings for Hispanic and Other Races in
Mecklenburg County experienced significant variability. Both Hispanic women and women of Other Races earned the least among all racial and ethnic groups during the past five years. Earnings for Hispanic women ranged from $18,939 in 2009 to $25,877 in 2007, while earnings for women of Other Races ranged from $17,794 in 2006 to $23,341 in 2009. White women and Hispanic women both saw decreases in earnings in 2009 from the previous year, while other racial and ethnic groups of women saw increases. African American women were the only racial or ethnic group to see annual increases consistently from 2005 through 2009.

**OCCUPATION AND WAGES**

Men in Mecklenburg County earned more than women in many occupations, as evidenced by earning differences in the occupations selected for this report (Figure 5).

Of these occupations, women in computer and mathematical occupations had the highest median earnings in Mecklenburg County at $58,527 in 2009, although men’s earnings for that field were higher at $66,894. Women in life, physical and social science occupations had the second highest median earnings at $55,429, while men with the same occupations earned $58,750. Women in sales and office occupations had the lowest median earnings at $27,730 in 2009, compared with men at $36,325. Education, training and library occupations had the second lowest median earnings, but represent the smallest earnings differential (2009 wage gap of 0.99) between men ($32,333) and women ($32,078) within the selected occupations. The largest earnings differential in Mecklenburg County was in health practitioner and technical occupations where women earned $44,472, compared with their male counterparts who earned $68,356 in 2009, resulting in a wage gap of 0.65.
Educational attainment for both men and women with a bachelor’s degree or higher in Mecklenburg County exceeded North Carolina and national averages each year from 2005 to 2009 (Figure 6).

Figure 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population 25 and Older with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</th>
<th>2005</th>
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<tr>
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<td>28.4%</td>
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<td>Mecklenburg County</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>39.8%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>37.2%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census American Community Survey

While both men and women in Mecklenburg County fared better than their counterparts at the national and state levels, differences in educational attainment between men and women were evident. Between 2005 and 2007, men consistently had higher educational attainment than women. The educational attainment gap between men and women narrowed in 2008. In 2009, the proportion of women with a bachelor’s degree or higher exceeded that of men in North Carolina and Mecklenburg County.

Educational attainment is important to the discussion on women, work and wages, because educational attainment can be closely tied to earnings potential. Women’s earnings increased with greater educational attainment, but not as substantially as men’s earnings (Figure 7).
Men earned more than women regardless of education level, but the disparity increased as the level of education increased in Mecklenburg County in 2009 (Figure 8). Women with less than a high school diploma earned $14,989, while men who lacked a high school diploma earned $18,325. Women with a graduate or professional degree earned $49,741, while their male counterparts earned $79,831 in 2009. The wage gap was closest to equity with less than a high school degree and increased as men and women attained higher levels of education. Women with graduate and professional degrees made just 62 cents for every dollar men with those degrees earned in 2009 in Mecklenburg County.
CONCLUSIONS

Women in Mecklenburg County have made significant gains in the past five years surrounding earnings and the wage gap. Compared with women at the state and national levels, women in Mecklenburg County were ahead in educational attainment and median earnings in 2009. Still disparities among gender, race and ethnicity related to earnings. Women on average were paid less than their male counterparts and paid less, compared with one another depending on race or ethnicity. In 2009, white women in Mecklenburg County were paid over $24,000 more than Hispanic women, a significant disparity persists. With changes in the demographic makeup in Mecklenburg County apparent over the past decade, one must ponder how women, especially those who are a minority, will fair in the coming years.

Reference

KEY FINDINGS

- Women posted fewer new hires throughout the recession and recovery.
- Women experienced fewer job separations than men after the recession began.
- After experiencing a negative net job flow in 2009, women experienced a positive net job flow in the first half of 2010 that was twice the size of the net job flow for men.
- In 2010, women are estimated to have had higher job creations than men.
- During the Great Recession, women’s unemployment rates differed across race and ethnicity, but all followed the same trend improvement from 2007 to 2008, with a rise in 2009.
- The number of women in poverty and female householders receiving food stamps increased considerably over the course of the recession.

INTRODUCTION

The Great Recession has widely been considered the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, noted for its length, severe job loss and prolonged recovery period. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the Great Recession lasted from December 2007 to June 2009. As this report is written, two years after the Great Recession officially ended, the American economy has yet to recover fully and now must attempt to rebound amidst decreased consumer confidence and business contraction.

Although research has already shown that both men and women were vulnerable to the turbulent economic conditions of the Great Recession, their trajectories have not been identical. Men experienced greater job loss at the height of the recession, while women are being affected in larger numbers after the official end of the Great Recession. Much of this difference in timing is due to different gender representations in employment across industries.

The Great Recession has affected families in some important ways. Labor force participation rates for women with children increased over the course of the recession, and families have become increasingly dependent upon women’s labor and earnings. Further, the number of families living in poverty and the number receiving public assistance benefits in Mecklenburg County has increased greatly over this time.

This report examines how men and women in the county fared during the Great Recession. It describes the overall features of the labor market and analyzes some of the residual impacts the recession had on families. The goal of this report is to understand the local conditions for women and men during the recession and how these local conditions compare with those at the national level.
This report focuses primarily on the overall differences in the recession’s impact on men and women. Subsequent reports will illustrate, in more detail, the dynamics of job loss and creation pertaining to men and women in different economic sectors or industries. Knowledge of these differences and the complexities they create in the labor market provides a more complete understanding of the recession’s effect on women in the workforce.

County-level data used in this report come from two sources published by the U.S. Census Bureau: the American Community Survey and Local Employment Dynamics. The Census Bureau’s Local Employment Dynamics is a relatively new dataset that provides detailed information on the labor market at the county level. Local Employment Dynamics Quarterly Workforce Indicators analyzed in this report include:

- Total employment
- New hires
- Job separations
- Net job flows
- Job creations

There are a few things to consider with these data. First, these data do not directly correspond to commonly-used labor market measures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey. Data are reported for the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Workforce Development Board which encompasses the entirety of Mecklenburg County and, unless otherwise noted, includes workers ages 14 to 99 for all industries. Local Employment Dynamics data have a 12- to 15-month lag in availability. Consequently, when this report was written, the most current data available for separations, job creations and net job flows were for the second quarter of 2010. The most current data for new hires and total employment available were for the third quarter of 2010. Data were current as of June 21, 2011.

**EMPLOYMENT AND JOB CREATIONS**

**TOTAL EMPLOYMENT**

Total employment represents the number of employees who worked for the same employer in both the current and previous quarter. Annual averages are derived from the quarterly figures.

In Mecklenburg County, men are consistently employed in greater numbers than women, regardless of time period, partially due to women’s lower labor force participation rates. This trend held true during the Great Recession (Figure 1). From 2007 to 2008 modest employment growth occurred for men and women, 3,753 and 8,586 respectively, as the recession was just beginning to affect the economy. The greatest losses in employment occurred between 2008 and 2009. Women’s employment decreased 3.4 percent during this time; men experienced a larger drop of 6.9 percent.

Employment declines continued into the first quarter of 2010 for both men and women. Women experienced a greater decline in employment than men, with a decrease of 7.9 percent for women versus a decrease of 4.6 percent for men. Beginning in the second quarter of 2010 and enduring into the third quarter, both sexes posted employment gains as the waning recession began showing signs of improvement.
NEW HIRES

New hires figures include the total number of workers that were not employed by their current employer during the previous four quarters. Annual totals are derived from the quarterly figures. Over the three year period, the largest number of new hires in Mecklenburg County occurred during 2007 before the recession started (Figure 2). In 2007, 5,433 more new hires were reported for men than for women. The number of new hires for both men and women declined in 2008 and again in 2009, with new hires for women consistently lower than those for men. New hires for women decreased 39 percent from 2007 to 2009, while men experienced a 35 percent decline in new hires during the same time period. Although data through the third quarter of 2010 indicate a continuation of previous declines, estimates for the 2010 annual average tell a different story: new hires rebounded and were once again on the rise. Men continued to fare better in new hires in the post-recession period, as evidenced in the data through the third quarter of 2010 and estimations for the year. New hires for men are estimated to have increased 9.2 percent between 2009 and 2010, and new hires for women are estimated to have increased only 4.2 percent.
SEPARATIONS

Separations data represent the total number of workers who were employed by a business in the current quarter but were not employed by that same business in the subsequent quarter. Annual totals are derived from the quarterly figures.\(^7\)

Separations in Mecklenburg County steadily declined for both men and women over the course of the recession. Although women posted slightly higher numbers of separations than men in 2007 (pre-recession), men experienced a greater number of separations in all subsequent time periods (recession and post-recession) (Figure 3). From 2007 to 2009, separations decreased 32 percent for women and 27 percent for men. Data through the second quarter of 2010 and estimations for the 2010 annual average indicate a continuation of the downward trend into the post-recession period. Separations for men are estimated to have decreased 13.3 percent from 2009 to 2010, and separations for women are estimated to have decreased 18 percent.\(^7\)

Although a decrease in separations is a positive sign, the reasons behind the decrease are difficult to determine. Fewer separations might have occurred because businesses were already operating with fewer employees and additional reductions may not have been feasible. More employees possibly were staying with their current employers rather than pursuing other jobs or opportunities due to economic uncertainty.

**Figure 3**

Separations in Mecklenburg County

![Separations in Mecklenburg County](source)

NET JOB FLOWS

Net job flow is the difference between total employment for all area businesses in the current quarter and that in the previous quarter. Annual totals are derived from the quarterly figures. A positive number for net job flow indicates that businesses were creating more jobs, and a negative number indicates that businesses were eliminating jobs. To move toward economic recovery, net job flows should be positive for several consecutive quarters.\(^7\)

The greatest positive annual net job flows for men and women occurred in 2007 before the recession began in earnest (Figure 4). In 2007, women experienced a positive net job flow of 22,406,
which was slightly higher than the net job flow for men (21,645). Then in 2008, men posted the first negative net job flow of the recession with a decline of 1,356 jobs, but women still recorded a small positive net job flow of 2,683. The single worst year for both men and women in terms of net job flow was 2009, and in this year, women clearly fared worse. The negative net job flow for women was nearly twice that for men—a net loss of 20,047 jobs for women and 10,671 for men. Through the first half of 2010, the economy and businesses were showing positive gains in employment. By the second quarter of 2010, women once again outpaced men with a positive net job flow of 22,709 men with 11,362.

Figure 4

![Net Job Flows in Mecklenburg County](image)

**JOB CREATIONS**

Job creation figures represent the number of new jobs that were created over the course of the quarter by either new businesses opening in the area or the expansion of employment by existing firms; annual totals are derived from the quarterly figures.

During the 2007–10 time period, the greatest number of job creations in Mecklenburg County occurred in 2007 when women outpaced men in newly created jobs with 99,533 and 92,916, respectively (Figure 5). The number of new jobs declined in the recessionary years of 2008 and 2009 for men and women, but women consistently had fewer job creations than men during this time. From 2007 to 2009, new jobs for women decreased 49 percent, while those for men decreased 40 percent. Data through the second quarter of 2010 and estimations for the 2010 annual average indicate that job creation increased since the official end of the recession and that women fared better in newly created jobs than men in the post-recession period. Between 2009 and 2010, women’s job creations are estimated to have increased 78.9 percent, while those for men are estimated to have increased just 32.1 percent.
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The labor force includes individuals (ages 16 to 64) in the civilian population who are employed or unemployed but actively seeking employment. The labor force participation rate is the percent of the population that is in the civilian labor force.6

Nationally, labor force participation rates for women have risen steadily since the 1970s.8 In Mecklenburg County, labor force participation by women exceeds women nationally. In 2009, 74.4 percent in the county participated in the labor force, compared with 70.4 percent of women nationally.6 Fewer women in the county participated in the labor force than men (86.7%) (Figure 6).6

Figure 6

Labor Force Participation by Sex

Source: US Census American Community Survey
During the Great Recession, labor force participation rates in Mecklenburg County remained largely unchanged for men and women. Men’s labor force participation was consistently around 86 percent during this time. Labor force participation for women showed slight fluctuations, increasing from 2007 (73.7%) to 2008 (75.9%), followed by a decrease in 2009 (74.4%).6

Labor force participation rates also varied among women of different races and ethnicities although all showed a similar trend over the course of the recession—a rise from 2007 to 2008 followed by a decline in 2009 (Figure 7). African American women experienced the highest rates of labor force participation, followed by white women. From 2007 to 2009, labor force participation rates for African American women were 77.9, 79.5 and 78.1 percent respectively, compared to white women’s labor force participation rates of 73.2, 74.9 and 74.2 percent during the same period.6

Figure 7

Asian and Hispanic women experienced the lowest labor force participation rates and the greatest variation from year to year. In 2007, both Asian and Hispanic women had a labor force participation rate of around 60 percent. Then in 2008, the labor force participation rates for Asian and Hispanic women increased to 72.2 and 68.4 percent, respectively, closing the gap with African American and white women. These rates declined in 2009 to 66.6 percent for Asian women and 63.7 percent for Hispanic women.6

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

The unemployment rate is the percent of individuals (16 to 64 years old) in the civilian labor force who are unemployed.6

Unemployment rates in Mecklenburg County fell slightly from 2007 to 2008 then rose significantly in 2009 (Figure 8). Although women experienced slightly higher unemployment rates than men in 2007 (7.1 and 6.6, respectively) and 2008 (6.5 and 6.1, respectively), men fared worse in 2009 with an unemployment rate of 12.2.6 During the same year, women experienced an unemployment rate of 9.1. These data are consistent
with national trends where men experienced more job loss and higher unemployment rates compared to their female counterparts.²

Figure 8

As with labor force participation, unemployment rates for women in Mecklenburg County varied across race and ethnicity, but the pattern is slightly different. Hispanic women and African American women had the highest unemployment rates; white and Asian women had the lowest (Figure 9).⁶

Despite having the lowest labor force participation rates, Hispanic women had the highest unemployment rates over the three-year period, increasing from 10.9 in 2007 to 12.7 in 2009. From 2007 to 2009, the unemployment rate for African American, white and Asian women followed the same general trend—decreasing from 2007 to 2008 and then rising above 2007 rates in 2009 to 11.5 for African American women, 7.6 for white women and 6.9 for Asian women.⁶

Figure 9
IMPACTS OF THE GREAT RECESSION

Given the high unemployment rates of recent years, families and individuals across the country have had to turn to others for assistance to survive without earnings from work. In Mecklenburg County, the story has been no different. According to Crisis Assistance Ministry in Charlotte, the number of people seeking emergency assistance through its Emergency Financial Assistance program nearly doubled since the beginning of the economic recession. In addition, the organization as a whole experienced a surge in new clients when 20,000 families sought assistance for the first time. During the 2009–10 year, Crisis Assistance Ministry distributed roughly $11 million in emergency financial assistance, an increase of 15 percent from the previous year. During this same time, 32,000 assessments were conducted for clients, an increase of 19 percent from the previous year.9

The agency has also seen a change in demographics of clients (Figure 10). Over the past three service years, the majority of clients have been African American, but this proportion has decreased slightly as the percent of white and Hispanic clients increased. However, the agency did not see a change in the family structure or household size. Around 67 percent of their clients live in female-headed households, and 33 percent live in male-headed households. The average household size for clients with children decreased slightly in 2009–10 to 3.64, compared with 3.84 in 2007–08.9

Figure 10

The number of individuals living below the poverty line increased during the recession (Figure 11). Over the three-year period, more women were living below the poverty line, compared with men. In 2007, 51,052 women were in poverty; this number climbed to 69,577 by 2009, a 36 percent increase. In 2007, 40,028 men were in poverty, and by 2009 this number increased 41 percent to 56,399. The largest annual increase for individuals in poverty occurred in 2009. From 2007 to 2008, a slight increase occurred in the number of men living in poverty and a slight decrease for women. In 2009, the effects of the recession were apparent in the sizeable increase in these numbers.6
The number of households receiving food stamps is a stark indicator of change in the economy. Figure 12 illustrates the increase in food stamp recipients by household from 2007 to 2009. In 2007, 13,643 households with children received food stamps. This number increased 69 percent to 23,094 in 2009. During this period, female-headed households with no husband present comprised about two-thirds of households receiving food stamps.6

![Food Stamp Recipients by Household Type](source)

Source: US Census American Community Survey
CONCLUSIONS

The worst economic downturn since the Great Depression created economic and social hardships in Mecklenburg County for both men and women. This report presented information and provided context for how men and women were affected in varying and significant ways during the Great Recession. Women accounted for fewer hires than men during and after the recession. After negative net job flows for men and women in 2009, both women and men posted positive net job flows in the first half of 2010, with women outpacing men. Men experienced greater numbers of separations than women although the basis for the differences may be more complex than the data represent. Post-recession, women are estimated to have had a greater number of job creations than men. Unemployment rates for women did not increase as significantly as for men, and the rates varied across race and ethnicity. Women in poverty and female householders receiving food stamps increased considerably.

This report provided an overview of the effects of the recession on men and women and highlighted their overall differences, but questions remain. Why do differences exist? Why were men and women affected at different times during the recession? What do these patterns reveal about the women’s prospects for recovery post-recession? Previous research has identified that these differences are due, at least partially, to varying gender representations across industries and women’s lower labor force participation rates.3,4,5 Future reports will seek to answer these questions in order to provide a greater understanding of the complex dynamics of the labor market related to gender.

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WOMEN, WORK AND WAGES

THIRD REPORT

KEY FINDINGS

STRENGTHS

- Earnings gaps have decreased in finance, healthcare and professional services.
- New hires maintain higher earnings ratios (lower wage gaps), compared with existing employees.

CHALLENGES

- Significant wage disparities between men and women still exist across many industries.
- Earnings ratios decrease as workers age (higher wage gaps).

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this report is to analyze the disparity in earnings between men and women across industries in Mecklenburg County. The wage gap or ratio is an often-cited statistic to highlight the disparity between the earnings of men and women. Most sources cite the wage gap in the United States being between 75 and 80 percent, meaning women only earn 75 to 80 percent of what men earn.

The wage gap statistic is not without criticism, in part because it does not compare or take into account equal work, training, education, overtime, or work experience between men and women. The wage gap does show the difference between men’s and women’s earnings across all jobs without respect to these differences. The gender wage gap can be partially explained by various societal norms and lifestyle choices that differ between men and women. Women often choose lower-paying, socially rewarding positions, and they move in and out of the workforce more frequently than men. Women generally work fewer paid hours, and they remain the primary family caregiver in society. Yet, the wage gap statistic is a benchmark measure of equality that represents a viable measure of earnings inequality between men and women.

The wage gap typically cited for the nation uses the median income of men and women. This report uses a slightly different measure of income: the average monthly earnings of men and women to determine the earnings ratio across industries in Mecklenburg County. Occupational groupings are often used to provide greater detail of earnings inequality, but this report considers broad employment industry groupings that contain both high and low paying occupations. This reveals the disproportionate allocation of high- and low-paying jobs within industries between men and women. The disparity between men and women in the same occupation also is represented through the data.
within industries. If men and women were given the same pay and distributed evenly among high- and low-paying occupations within an industry, the earnings gap would be zero.

In this report, four industries are targeted for further analysis: finance and insurance; professional, scientific, and technical services; educational services; and healthcare and social assistance. Along with an analysis of the targeted industries, the earnings gap between men and women is examined by age cohorts to determine how it changes as workers age. New hire earnings across industries are also examined to observe differences between initial earnings of men and women. Data for this report were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Local Employment Dynamics Quarterly Workforce Indicators.

**EARNINGS RATIO BY INDUSTRY**

Figure 1 demonstrates the variability in the earnings gap across industries. Among all industries, the earnings ratio was 63 percent in 2009, the latest annual data available. Women had average monthly earnings 37 percent less than men or just 63 percent of men’s average earnings. The smallest earnings gap was in educational services, with an earnings ratio of 85 percent. The largest earnings gap was in arts, entertainment and recreation, with an earnings ratio of 19 percent. This number is skewed because professional athletes are included in this industry (i.e., Carolina Panthers and Charlotte Bobcats). A small number of high earners inflate the average pay of men. The next lowest earnings ratios occur in healthcare and social assistance (38%) and finance and insurance (52%). The majority of industries, including both high- and low-skill service industries and goods-producing industries, had an earnings ratio in the 70 to 79 percent range.

*Figure 1*
AGE COHORTS

Figure 2 illustrates earnings ratio values for three years and the first three quarters of 2010 for all industries across three age cohorts and for all employees. The overall earnings ratio shows a steady improvement from 2007 to the third quarter 2010, increasing from an earnings ratio of 57 percent to 62 percent. The only shift that interrupted this improvement was a decline during the first quarter 2010. This decline was present in each age cohort and is a cyclical data irregularity that occurs with the posting of bonus pay. The decline points to large differences in bonus pay between men and women.

A similar positive trend of narrowing the wage gap is mirrored across all three age cohorts, with a five percentage point increase in each cohort from 2007 to the third quarter 2010. The smallest earnings gap occurred in the youngest age cohort (25 to 34 years old) where the earnings ratio was consistently in the 70 percent range, peaking at 76 percent. In sum, women earn 24 percent less than men. Although this difference is significant, progress has occurred. The earnings gap among men and women increases by age cohort, with the declining earnings ratios for the older age cohorts. The 35- to 44-age cohort had earnings ratios 10 to 12 percentage points lower than the 25- to 34-age cohort. The oldest age cohort (45 to 54 years old) exceeded an earnings ratio of 60 percent just once in the six data time periods presented, Figure 2.

Figure 2

![Earnings by Age Cohorts](chart)

FINANCE AND INSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

The (1) finance and insurance and (2) professional, scientific and technical services (professional services) industries generally require higher education and technical skills. In both industries, women have tended to account for fewer employees, particularly in higher-paying occupations. More recently, women have accounted for a greater number of employees, which has in part contributed
to increased earnings ratios (Figure 3). As mentioned before, industry groupings represent all employment in an industry from low- to high-skilled occupations.

Finance is well known as a key industry in Charlotte that employs nearly 70,000 people. In the comparison of men’s and women’s earnings in the industry, the earnings gap has had one of the largest improvements among all industries. The earnings ratio increased from 41 percent in 2007 to 56 percent in the third quarter 2010. Although women still only earn a little more than half of what men earn in finance, the improvement is significant in such a short time period. The sharp decrease in the earnings ratio for the first quarter 2010 is a product of the bonus cycle for the finance industry (bonus pay is typically posted in the first quarter of a new year) and represents one of the most pronounced discrepancies among all industries for men and women. Financial firms are often criticized for lavish bonuses made public for many senior executives, but bonuses are an industry-wide norm that occur at all occupational levels albeit smaller for non-executives. The dramatic increase in the earnings gap for the first quarter reveals that men are receiving a disproportionate share of bonus pay in the finance industry, likely a result of the disproportionate number of men in executive positions in the industry, comprising a higher share of bonus pay, Figure 3.

Figure 3

The professional services industry includes employment in architecture, engineering, scientific research, computers and the legal field, to name a few. The earnings ratio for professional services increased from 58 percent to 65 percent from 2007 to the third quarter 2010, which is similar to the overall earnings ratios and among the highest earnings gaps across all industries.

New employee hires had higher earnings ratios for finance and professional services (Figure 4), compared with the earnings ratios for all employees (Figure 3). The cause for this discrepancy is not revealed in the data, but as seen earlier with the youngest age cohort’s having the highest earnings ratio, the hiring of a younger workforce can cause the earnings ratio to be higher for new hires. The gap between new hire earnings ratios and those for all employees for professional services is smaller than that of the finance industry. The earnings gap between men and women in professional services does not vary between new hires and existing employees, unlike in the finance industry where the earnings gap is larger when new hires and existing employees are compared.
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Educational and healthcare services represent two industries where women traditionally constitute the bulk of the workforce. Educational services tend to have one of the highest earnings ratios among all industries, signifying a small wage gap between men and women. The earnings ratio for educational services increased from 75 percent in 2007 to 85 percent in 2009 (Figure 5), but decreased to 71 percent in the first quarter 2010, followed by another decrease in the third quarter 2010 (68%). At the current depressed levels, the earnings ratio for educational services declined from one of the smallest wage gaps and is currently similar to other industries.
The healthcare industry had some of the lowest earnings ratios among all industries. Although certain occupations within healthcare are dominated by women (i.e., nursing), the industry grouping comprises all occupations, including higher-wage physicians and doctors. Although improving, the number of women employed is less than that of men. The disproportionate number of men in higher-paying occupations in the healthcare industry (and women’s larger share of employment in social assistance occupations) contributes to the large earnings gap. The healthcare service earnings ratio had a high of 37 percent in 2007 and during the first quarter 2010. A high of 40 percent occurred in 2008 and in the second quarter of 2010.

New employee hires had higher earnings ratios for 2007–09 (Figure 6) when compared to earnings ratios of all employees (Figure 5) in educational services. Beginning in the first quarter 2010, new hire earnings for educational services were less than existing employees. Healthcare services new employee hires had higher earnings ratios, compared with the earnings ratios of all employees (Figure 5), indicating that the wage gap between men and women for new hires in healthcare is smaller than the gap for existing employees.

**Figure 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Hires Earnings Ratio for Health and Healthcare Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Services</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007: 85.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: 79.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009: 83.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Q1: 75.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Q2: 66.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Q3: 65.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthcare and Social Assistance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007: 54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008: 64.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009: 54.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Q1: 59.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Q2: 53.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Q3: 49.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCLUSIONS**

The gender wage gap is often used to highlight the disparity between men’s and women’s earnings. This report presented information and provided context for how men’s and women’s earnings are different by presenting earnings ratios across various industry groupings and age cohorts in Mecklenburg County.

Educational services typically have a high earnings ratio and thus a small earnings gap between men and women. Healthcare and social assistance and finance and insurance industries maintain low earnings ratios (high wage gaps). The earnings gap between men and women increases for older age cohorts. The earnings ratio between men and women increased in all targeted industries (lower wage gaps); with the exception of educational services, but significant disparities exist across many industries.
KEY FINDINGS

STRENGTHS

- Compared to older women, young women earn a higher percent of their male counterpart’s median earnings.
- The wage gap decreased for all age groups from 2007 to 2010.

CHALLENGES

- Median weekly earnings for women still lag behind men.
- Women have gained back fewer jobs lost in the recession than men.

INTRODUCTION

This report analyzes how women fared in the workplace at the national level after the Great Recession which ended in June 2009, compared with their status beforehand when the recession began in December 2007. This report also compares women to their male counterparts before and after the recession in terms of total job growth, job growth in the public sector and wages earned.

The Great Recession was a difficult period for both men and women at the local and national levels, and its affects are still being felt. Changes in employment status, income levels and family dynamics were experienced by many throughout the country. Some people were affected in drastic and negative ways, while others had experiences that were neutral or even positive.

The latest national unemployment numbers for November 2011 show the unemployment rate was 8.7 percent, a decrease from the November 2010 rate of 9.8 percent. Although the decline in the unemployment rate is a positive sign, the aftermath of the recession still lingers. Many jobs that were lost during the recession have not been recovered, savings accounts of families have diminished or disappeared, and many pursuing work remain unemployed.

JOB GROWTH

Throughout the recession, the economy experienced gains and losses in employment and new job growth. By September 2010, one year after the recession officially ended, women had only regained 19.7 percent (536,000) of jobs lost since the beginning of the recession in December 2007, while men had regained 32.3 percent (1.95 million) of jobs lost. Although the job recovery has been slow for both men and women, men are faring better than women.¹

More recently, both men and women have experienced a substantial rise in the number of jobs. During September and October 2011, women gained 113,000 jobs while men gained 197,000. In November 2011, women gained nearly 65,000 jobs, while men gained 55,000. From November 2010 through November 2011, women accounted for 30 percent (474,000) of jobs added to payrolls while men accounted for 70 percent (1,126,000). One reason why men did better than women during this period is because women hold a greater share of state and local government jobs. During November 2011, government employment decreased by 20,000 jobs while the private sector added 140,000 jobs.²

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

Men and women employed in the public sector were affected differently depending on the level of government, (local, state or federal) in which they held jobs. In all levels of government employment, women suffered a decrease in employment from December 2008 to July 2011. In December 2008, 9,048,000 women were employed at the local level, and by July 2011 the number decreased by 421,000 (4.7%) to 8,627,000. Women employed by state government decreased by 13,000 from December 2008 (2,667,000) to July 2011 (2,654,000), representing the smallest change in government employment for women, with a decrease of only 0.5 percent. Women employed at the federal level decreased 39,000 (3.2%) from December 2008 (1,233,000) to July 2011 (1,194,000). In total, women lost 473,000 government jobs between December 2008 and July 2011, resulting in a 3.7 percent decrease.³

Women were not the only ones affected by budget cuts and the economic downturn. Men faced employment cuts at local and state government levels. In December 2008, 5,541,000 men were employed by local governments, but by July 2011, only 5,454,000 were employed accounting for a 1.6 percent decrease. At the state government level, men lost 104,000 (4.1%) jobs from December 2008 to July 2011. Men employed by the federal government were the only group to gain jobs from December 2008 to July 2011. In December 2008, 1,548,000 men were employed by the federal government. This number increased 5.3 percent through July 2011, when 1,630,000 men were employed. Compared with women’s 473,000 (3.7%) decrease, men experienced a smaller decrease of only 1.1 percent over this time period, with 109,000 fewer employed in July 2011 than December 2008 for all levels of government.⁴
RATIO OF EARNINGS

Women’s ratio of earnings to men was 81.2 percent in 2010 for all women age 16 and older. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics looks at how the ratio varies in terms of occupation type. Occupations such as personal financial advisors, retail salespersons, lawyers and postsecondary teachers have lower ratios than the overall ratio of earnings compared to men. Other occupations have earnings ratios that show women earn more than their male counterparts, including combined food preparation and serving workers, bill and account collectors, and stock clerks and order fillers as illustrated in Figure 1.5

Figure 1

Overall, women experienced gains towards equity in earnings with their male counterparts from 2007 to 2010. The average weekly earnings for full-time working women was $614 in 2007 and increased to $669 in 2010. Earnings for women working full-time were 80 percent and 81 percent of their male counterparts in 2007 and 2010, respectively, a major increase from 62 percent in 1979 when the Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking the measure.6

Median earnings for women working full-time increased in each age group from 2007 to 2010 as seen in Figure 2. Women still lag behind men in median earnings, but women’s earnings have increased more than men’s earnings across all age groups. Women ages 45 to 54 earned less than women ages 35 to 44 in both 2007 and 2010. This phenomenon did not occur with men and could be a reflection of women’s traditional role as caregiver and subsequent return to the workforce without experiencing the continued upward mobility and earnings increase of men as they remain uninterrupted in the workforce gaining experience and seniority.7
The wage gap closed between 2007 and 2010 for women of each age group as well as for total full-time and salary workers. In 2010, women earned 81.2 percent of what their male counterparts earned, up from 80.2 percent in 2007. However, as Figure 3 illustrates, as women age, they begin to earn less percentage-wise than their male counterparts earn. Women ages 16 to 19 earned 94.6 percent of their male counterpart’s earnings, a major increase from 2007 when they earned 89.1 percent. Women ages 20 to 24 earned 93.8 percent of what their male counterparts earned in 2010, an increase from 2007 (90.3%). As women age, the wage gap widens and women ages 55 to 64 only earned 75.2 percent of what their male counterparts earned in 2010, an increase from 2007 (72.8%) but significantly less than their younger peers experienced.8

Figure 3
CONCLUSION

Nationally, women experienced some gains in employment measures, compared with their male counterparts when viewed before and after the recession. For example, women on average made more in 2010 than in 2007. In addition, the wage gap between men and women decreased across all age groups from 2007 to 2010. Although many occupations exist where women earn more than their male counterparts, they are predominantly lower-paying jobs, compared with occupations where men earn more than women. Although a major effect of the recession was an increase in unemployment, women who were working made more money on average in 2010 than before the recession began in 2007. However, women did lose a significant number of jobs during the recession that have not returned. Women have a long way to go to achieve equity with their male counterparts. However small gains highlighted in this analysis should result in a more equal workplace in the future. Continuing to document the experience of women in the workforce will help ensure that this progress continues and is supported by employment policies and practices throughout all segments of the economy.

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GENDER AND CAREER EXPERIENCES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE
The purpose of the current research was to examine gender inequality that occurs even after men and women embark on the same career path—a path that begins with an undergraduate degree in business from the same university. Gender differences in four areas were examined: career and life interests over time, career outcomes, determinants of career outcomes, and perceptions of career helpers and hindrances.

DATA
Data were collected from alumni of the college of business from a large southeastern university. Data include 430 quantitative responses to an online survey and 68 qualitative responses to online interviews.

FINDINGS
Male and female business school graduates differ in their career and life interests. The differences are complex and vary depending on the perspective taken. In general, male graduates tend to be more family-focused than female graduates.

Male and female business school graduates differ in salary but not in other career outcomes. Nearly two-thirds of the salary difference can be explained by gender differences in family characteristics, years of experience and work hours.

Career-enhancing job characteristics have consistent positive effects on career outcomes for both male and female graduates. Other variables, such as having a graduate degree or working more paid hours, have positive effects on some career outcomes but negative effects on others for female graduates.

Male graduates view personal characteristics and support from their spouse as instrumental to their progress, whereas female graduates focus on support from their social network and extended family. Female graduates view their personal characteristics and family obligations as hindering their progress, whereas male graduates focus on poor educational fit and the economy as hindrances.
INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality at work is often attributed to the fact that women tend to be concentrated in lower-paying, lower-status occupations than those dominated by men. Yet, even when women do enter male-dominated careers, they experience invisible barriers to reaching the high-paying, high-status jobs. Thus, understanding experiences of women within male-dominated career paths can uncover underlying processes that lead to large-scale gender inequality at work.

The current research was designed to examine the differential experiences of men and women in a male-dominated, high-paying career path—namely, business. Data were collected from alumni of the college of business from a large southeastern university. Data include 430 quantitative responses to an online survey and 68 qualitative responses to online interviews. This report details findings pertaining to the research questions stated below.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do the career and life interests of business school graduates change over time? How do such changes differ for men and women?
2. What are the gender differences in career outcomes of business school graduates? What explains these differences?
3. How are career outcomes differentially determined for male and female business school graduates?
4. What do male and female business school graduates perceive as helpers and hindrances to their careers?

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How do career and life interests change over time?
Do changes differ for men and women?

OVERVIEW

Gender differences in career and family interests are often thought to underlie gender differences in career outcomes. To test this hypothesis, the career and life interests of male and female business school graduates were examined according to this hypothesis: both men and women would have primarily career-related interests—e.g., aspirations toward a high-status, high-paying career—at the start of their careers. Also hypothesized was that over time, women would show a decrease in career-related interests and an increase in family-related interests. Men’s career-related interests were expected to remain stable over time.
Survey Variables

- Career orientation
- Family orientation
- Status-based career satisfiers
- Socio-emotional career satisfiers
- Life aspirations

Interview Questions

“How did you originally become interested in business or management when you studied at [this university]? What factors played a role in you choosing your college major?”

“Please think about you and your life in general. All things considered, what does the word ‘success’ mean to you?”

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Differences were negligible in career orientation, family orientation, status-based career satisfiers, and socio-emotional career satisfiers over time for men and women.

Women across nearly all ages were likely to have life aspirations that were simultaneously career and family focused. The focus of men’s life aspirations was variable across the ages.

Gender differences in current definitions of success differed somewhat from the reasons men and women listed for choosing business as their college major. Women were more likely than men to say they chose business as their college major because they wanted to achieve financial success. They were less likely to list financial success in their descriptions of what success means. More men than women were likely to list financial success as important to them currently. Men also were more likely than women to mention family as a main component of their current success. Additionally, women were more likely than men to list overall balance and making a contribution to society when explaining what success means to them now.

SURVEY FINDINGS: LIFE AND CAREER SATISFIERS

Career Orientation

- Women were slightly less career oriented. No significant age difference was noted.

Family Orientation

- There is no significant gender difference. Family orientation increases over time at the same rate for both men and women.

SURVEY FINDINGS: LIFE ASPIRATIONS

Observations

- Male and female business school graduates had similar life aspirations at the time of graduation. Most had aspirations that were career and family focused.
- The career- and-family-focused trend was stable for females until mid to late forties.
- Men, however, alternated between career-focused and primarily family-focused from mid to late twenties until early to mid-forties.
- Women were slightly more satisfied by socio-emotional career characteristics. No change occurred over time for men or women.
- Women of all ages were less likely to have career-focused life aspirations than any other type of life aspiration. Men of most ages were less likely to have career-focused life aspirations than other type of life aspiration. One notable exception was early to mid-fifties when men chose between family or career, rather than focusing on both simultaneously.
**INTERVIEW FINDINGS: REASONS FOR CHOOSING BUSINESS AS A MAJOR IN COLLEGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Interest or Passion</td>
<td>General interest in or passion for business</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior Exposure</td>
<td>Prior exposure to or familiarity with the field of business</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Feelings of competence in business classes and the field of business</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Success</td>
<td>Belief that a business degree leads to financial success</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Interests</td>
<td>Broad interests in general; feeling that business would enable them to study many different concepts</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry Demand</td>
<td>Belief in an industry demand for college graduates in business</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>Desire to own a business someday</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total Reasons Mentioned: 36 Male, 57 Female*
INTERVIEW FINDINGS: CURRENT DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

Contribution to Society

“Success is to make a difference and make an impact. I may seem like a dreamer, but I feel that no matter how big or how small your role, if you make an impact every day, you have achieved success. To fail is to be forgotten.”

General Interest or Passion

“That semester I fell in love with accounting and switched my major.” (Female, 25)

Industry Demand

“What influenced my decision to major in business was what I perceived to be the career opportunities available to me in the future.” (Male, age unknown)

Financial Success

“I was driven by a high salary in choosing a career path.” (Female, 27)

“I would need two million in equity to be considered successful. Failure would be to never hit one million in equity. I know a lot of people who consider a money number a bad thing but it is a way to grade yourself.” (Male, 37)

“I want to do well enough financially to retire before I turn 50 and live in the Caribbean (and of course provide the items such as medical & education for my entire family - not saying without a little extra work or frustration (or cost) but still provide the best).” (Male, 34)

Family Success

“Success to me at this point in my life would mean having a family and being able to support them doing something I love. To me failure is not being able to be the figure that my family needs me to be. If I could not provide for them then I would consider myself a failure to my family.” (Male, 31)

“Failure would be not being able to pay my bills and feed my family.” (Male, 42)

Competence

“I was in accounting in high school. I did very well in that area and thought that was the area I should go into.” (Female, age unknown)

“I tried to think about what I liked and what I was good at. I really enjoyed French in high school and college, and I felt that I was rather good at managing my finances. So, I chose to switch to International Business as my major. I did really well in Economics.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to Society</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Success</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Success</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Success</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige or Status</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion or Spirituality</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Definitions Offered: 99 (Male) 111 (Female)
Balance

“Success in life is the ability to maintain balance in the key components attributed to a happy fulfilled life - family, friends, work, etc.” (Female, 49)

Prior Exposure

“I took business courses through high school and loved them. I was also a member of Future Business Leader of America when I was in high school” (Female, 31)

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What are the gender differences in career outcomes of business school graduates? What explains these differences?

OVERVIEW

Most research focuses on gender differences in salary across various occupations and career paths. The motivations for this research question were:

1. To examine gender differences in salary when the sample is constrained to men and women who embark on the same career path
2. To examine gender differences in other outcomes such as job satisfaction, career satisfaction, life satisfaction, family-to-work conflict and work-to-family conflict
3. To examine gender differences in career outcomes in relation to several hypothesized explanatory variables

Survey Variables

- Salary
- Job satisfaction
- Career satisfaction
- Life satisfaction
- Family-to-work conflict
- Work-to-family conflict
- Spouse who is not employed outside the home
- Years since graduation
- Paid work hours
- Career orientation
- Communal personality

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Male business school graduates in the current sample earned on average $24,692 more per year than female business school graduates. This wage gap was reduced to $8,816 when the number of years since graduation, the number of paid work hours, spouse working status, career orientation, and communal personality were statistically controlled. There were no gender differences in job satisfaction, career satisfaction, life satisfaction, family-to-work conflict or work-to-family conflict.
SURVEY FINDINGS: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CAREER OUTCOMES

- There were no gender differences in career satisfaction. Non-white graduates were less satisfied with their careers than white graduates.
- There were no gender or race differences in job satisfaction.
- White men earned the most, followed by white women and non-white men. Non-white women earned the least.
- There were no gender or race differences in work-to-family conflict.
Work-Interference with Family

Family-Interference with Work
SURVEY FINDINGS: GENDER WAGE GAP

In the current sample, male business school graduates earned on average $24,692 more per year than female graduates. The pie graph below represents the total gender wage gap in the current sample of graduates. Each slice of the pie represents an estimated amount of the gender wage gap that is attributable to the corresponding explanatory variable. Of the total gender wage gap, $15,876 is attributable to the explanatory variables outlined below. Thus, if the male and female business school graduates in the current sample were equal with regard to each of the explanatory variables, the gender wage gap would be reduced to $8,816.

$5,465 – Nonworking Spouse

Men are more likely to have a spouse not employed outside the home. Having a spouse who is not employed outside the home is positively related to earnings.

$4,901 – Years since Graduation

The earliest cohorts of business school graduates were primarily male. The number of years since a person has graduated can also be thought of as human capital or experience, which is positively related to earnings.

$3,602 – Number of Paid Work Hours

Men on average work more hours per week than women. Working more hours is positively related to earnings.

$1,197 – Career Orientation

Men are slightly more likely to be career focused overall. Career orientation is positively related to earnings.

$711 – Communal Personality

Women are more likely to have a communal personality characterized by kindness, helpfulness, and sympathy. Communal personality is negatively related to earnings.

$8,816 – Remaining Unexplained Wage Gap

After statistically controlling for all of the explanatory variables mentioned, there is still a gender wage gap of $8,816.
RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How are career outcomes differentially determined for male and female business school graduates?

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this research question was to examine variables that are expected to be related to career outcomes. The graphs below display relative effects of various determinants of career outcomes. All graphs are on the same scale—the standard deviation of the outcome variables—for comparison purposes. The analysis was conducted with three goals in mind:

1. To see how each determinant is related to career outcomes relative to other determinants.
2. To see how each determinant is related to each career outcome relative to other career outcomes and life satisfaction.
3. To see how strongly each determinant is related to each career outcome for women relative to men.

Survey Variables

- Years since graduation
- Graduate degree
- Career-enhancing job characteristics
- Career orientation
- Family orientation
- Status-based career satisfiers
- Gender egalitarian beliefs
- Paid work hours
- Unpaid work hours
- Marital status
- Nonworking spouse

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Career enhancing job characteristics had the most consistent positive relationship with career outcomes for both men and women. The number of years since graduation and having a nonworking spouse were positively related to salary for women, yet the latter was also related to decreased job satisfaction. The other determinants had varied relationships across career outcomes for men and women.
SURVEY FINDINGS: RELATIVE EFFECTS OF DETERMINANTS OF CAREER OUTCOMES

- The number of years since graduation, which can also be thought of as human capital or experience, was more strongly related to salary for men than for women.
- Career orientation had moderate positive relationships with job, career, and life satisfaction; however, it also was associated with greater work-to-family conflict.
- Family orientation was positively related to life satisfaction for both men and women. It was moderately related to job and career satisfaction, but only for women.
- When women gauged their career satisfaction by status or prestige, they tended to earn a higher salary, but were less satisfied with their job and their life in general.
- Having a spouse or partner was positively related to salary for men only. It was associated with greater work-to-family conflict for women.
- Having a spouse not employed outside the home was strongly related to salary for both men and women. It was negatively associated with job satisfaction for women and positively associated with career satisfaction for men.
- Having a nonworking spouse was strongly related to salary for both men and women. It was negatively associated with job satisfaction for women and positively associated with career satisfaction for men.
- Working more unpaid hours per week was negatively related to salary for women only. It was also associated with greater job satisfaction for both men and women.
- The belief that men and women should be equal was associated with greater salary for men and women. It also was related to greater career satisfaction for men and less family-to-work conflict for women.
- Career-enhancing job characteristics, such as developmental opportunities and job challenge, had strong positive relationships with career outcomes in addition to life satisfaction.
- Having a graduate degree was positively related to salary and career satisfaction for women; however, it also was associated with greater work-to-family conflict for women.
Career Enhancing Job Characteristics: Relative Effect on Career Outcomes

- **Salary**: M > F
- **Job Satisfaction**: M > F
- **Career Satisfaction**: M > F
- **Life Satisfaction**: M > F
- **Family to Work Conflict**: M > F
- **Work to Family Conflict**: M > F

Career Orientation: Relative Effect on Career Outcomes

- **Salary**: M > F
- **Job Satisfaction**: M > F
- **Career Satisfaction**: M > F
- **Life Satisfaction**: M > F
- **Family to Work Conflict**: M > F
- **Work to Family Conflict**: M > F
RESEARCH QUESTION 4:

_What do male and female business school graduates perceive as helpers and hindrances to career and life outcomes?_

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this research question was to examine the determinants of career and life outcomes from the perspective of business school graduates. In particular, gender differences in perceived helpers and hindrances were examined.

Interview Questions

- “Looking back, think about the circumstances, opportunities, people, etc. at work that have helped or hindered your life or career progress thus far. Please list the two most important things that have helped your progress and the two most important things that have hindered your progress.”
- “What other circumstances, opportunities, people, etc. outside of work have helped or hindered your life or career progress?”
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Men were more likely to say aspects of their personality helped their career success, as well as support from their spouse, and their educational and work experiences. Women were more likely to say their religion or faith helped their career success, as well as their social networks, and having a supportive extended family.

Women were more likely than men to report that office politics or some form of discrimination has hurt their career success. They were also more likely than men to say that aspects of their personality hindered their career success (i.e., being unwilling to take risks, not being “brave” enough to network, etc.), or that their spouse or family obligations hurt their careers more than men.

Men were more likely than women to say that not having the right kind or enough education hurt their careers, as well as the poor economy.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS: CAREER HELPERS

Support from Family

“My parents have helped me over the course of my career. They have encouraged me to do what is best and at times have helped financially.”

Support from Spouse

“Without a doubt, my wife has been the number one influence on my later adult life. She was unbelievably supportive of my decision to return to school to finish my degree, despite the additional hardship it placed on her to maintain the household and raise young children, very much on her own. She is always there for our family and I, consistently taking on more and more responsibility to ensure her family’s happiness.” (Male, 48)

“My wife helped my career because she supported my decision to go back and get my MBA. I did spend a lot of time away from the family (team meetings, studying, trips abroad for school) but she was able to maintain the household.” (Male, 41)

Personal Characteristics

“I would have to say that my work ethic is probably the number one thing that has helped my progress. Apparently, my employer has always found my willingness to do whatever it took to be successful, coupled with a tremendous sense of urgency and innate ability to prioritize my activities to be a true strength which quickly shows in my performance.” (Male, 48)

“Relationship building is the other thing that has helped me. I really like meeting new people and work hard to maintain my professional relationships. This has been a major help during my career.” (Female, 33)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Network</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from Family</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from Supervisor or Mentor</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Characteristics</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from Spouse</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion or Faith</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Helpers Mentioned 82 102
**INTERVIEW FINDINGS: CAREER HINDRANCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindrances</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor Economy</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Obligations</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad Work Experience or Lack of Experience</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Politics or Discrimination</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Enough or Not the Right Education</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Economy</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with Supervisor</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues with Extended Family</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Hindrances Mentioned</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**
- Poor Economy: The economy is also a hindrance. Given the economic uncertainty—my current business has been slow to add positions/opportunities.
- Family Obligations: Some things that have hindered my progress are marriage and relocation. When you're married your decisions are not made for yourself anymore and you have to consider the wants and needs of the family unit. This kept me from seeking opportunities in fashion/retail since the income level and relocation would not have been ideal for both me and my husband.
- Office Politics or Discrimination: I had a main contact at the firm that I would email whenever my returns were done...She many times would not respond to my emails or process the returns like she should have been doing. She would wait on them. This made me look bad to not only my boss because he was wondering where my work was, but it also made me look bad to my clients.
- Not Enough or Not the Right Education: The lack of my CPA. Because when I made the decision to get my MBA instead of my CPA, the MBA was viewed more knowledgeable. However, since the various financial scandals (e.g., Enron,) my belief is that now the CPAs have the advantage. I feel that some opportunities that I wanted had been given to others because the CPA license gained in importance.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

To ensure that men and women in business careers realize their full potential as workers, the following actions are recommended:

- Passage of Fair Pay Restoration legislation.
- Given the benefit to women of social networking and mentoring, programs supporting these activities at all levels (including the student level) should be created and supported.
- Policies promoting work-life balance should be encouraged and sanctioned.
- Women should be encouraged to seek out spousal support and other support networks because these were associated with positive career outcomes.
- Seminars on navigating office politics for women early in their careers.
- Business schools should encourage career counseling for students, women especially, that assists their development of the abilities and characteristics needed for business success (e.g., career strategies, risk-taking, networking, and negotiation).
- Women should be encouraged to pursue education in in career paths that are dominated by men and should be supported in their endeavors.

References

APPENDIX: LIST OF KEY VARIABLES

Career enhancing job characteristics: The extent to which a person’s job is characterized by challenge and opportunity.

Career orientation: The extent to which a person’s life satisfaction comes from his or her career. Career orientation and family orientation were each measured with 4-item likert scales. Example items are "A major source of satisfaction in my life is my family" and "A major source of satisfaction in my life is my career"; the former assesses family orientation, the latter assesses career orientation.

Career satisfaction: The extent to which a person is satisfied with his or her career progress.

Communal personality: The extent to which a person exhibits feminine personality characteristics such as kindness, helpfulness, and sympathy.

Family orientation: The extent to which a person’s life satisfaction comes from his or her family.

Family-to-work conflict: The extent that family obligations interfere with work activities.

Gender egalitarian beliefs: The extent that a person believes that men and women should have equals roles in society.

Graduate degree: Whether a person has a graduate degree at any graduate level.

Job satisfaction: The extent to which a person is satisfied with his or her job.

Life aspirations: Open-ended responses about current life aspirations, coded as family focused, career focused, career and family focused, or other focused.

Life satisfaction: The extent to which a person is satisfied with her or her life in general.

Marital status: Whether a person is married or partnered rather than single.

Nonworking spouse: Whether a person has a spouse working outside the home.

Paid work hours: Number of paid hours worked per week

Salary: Total pretax income, not including that of a spouse or partner.

Socio-emotional career satisfiers: The extent to which a person’s career satisfaction comes from having a friendly, collegial work environment.

Status-based career satisfiers: The extent to which a person’s career satisfaction comes from having high status or prestige.

Unpaid work hours: Number of unpaid hours worked per week, including volunteering, housework, pro-bono work, etc.

Work-to-family conflict: The extent that work obligations interfere with family activities.

Years since graduation: Number of years passed since receipt of undergraduate business degree.
GENDER REPRESENTATIONS ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

INTRODUCTION

The Women’s Summit at UNC Charlotte undertook this research project with funding from Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. The stated goal of the study was to document whether women were proportionately represented on local government boards and commissions—positions that are appointed by local elected officials—in the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, and identify potential barriers or disincentives to participation might exist. Additional questions the study intended to address involved whether groups of individuals in the community experienced differences in the application, nomination, and appointment processes as well as the experience of serving on a local government board or commission. For example, are women more or less likely than men to have a personal connection to the individual who nominates them to serve? Are women and minorities more or less likely to use networking techniques in their pursuit of a position on a board or commission? Are women and minorities more or less likely to view the board or commission on which they serve as being adequately diverse? These questions were the basis for the survey.

The survey was designed in early 2011 with the goal of reaching three distinct groups of participants in local government boards and commissions—those who currently volunteer in this capacity; those who have recently served but have left for any reason; and those who have recently applied to participate but have not (or not yet) been appointed. The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County provided lists of names and contact information of those participating on boards or commissions currently and recently, along with application forms that had been filed within the past year.

Additionally, the focus group discussions held in early August 2011 served to flesh out the findings of the survey with qualitative and contextual details. Participants in those four discussions provided important observations about the application and appointment process as well as their experiences serving on local government boards and commissions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary outlines the most relevant findings this research has revealed. The full report, which will be available Summer 2012, elaborates upon these issues and provides additional context provided by focus group participants.

1 Both the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County administrators maintain applications on file for one year from the time of application.
Women both apply and are getting appointed at about 40 percent. As such, gender bias in appointment does not seem to be an issue, on average. However this measure does not explain why women apply at lower rate than men.

Although 40 percent of board and commission members are women, some boards are predominantly male, while others are primarily female.

**Representation:** In addition to questions related to gender balance on boards and commissions, questions were raised about representativeness more broadly defined. Survey respondents were demographically different from the community in several notable ways.

The median age of survey respondents was approximately 20 years older than the median age of the Charlotte/Mecklenburg County community. The incomes of survey respondents, along with their levels of education, were substantially higher than the community as a whole. The diverse composition of racial and ethnic groups in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County were not reflected in the survey respondents.

Both survey respondents and focus group participants recognized that the boards and commissions are not always as diverse as the community that they represent. White survey respondents were statistically less likely than non-white respondents to view the boards and commissions as broadly representative of the community. This survey finding was corroborated by focus group participants who expressed a desire to have more diversity on the boards and commissions, in terms of being more reflective of the community as well as having more young people serving.

Implications for being more broadly inclusive should not be understated. Local government boards and commissions serve an important role through their advisory capacities, and in some cases, can have a direct impact in the community. Community participation in local government could give voice to otherwise underrepresented citizens, granting them a stake in the local outcomes.

**Getting appointed:** Participants report that getting appointed is a political process, particularly for the more influential boards and commissions that some referred to as stepping stones to elected office.

Some respondents recommended a more “merit-based” appointment process although becoming more merit-based would likely cause boards and commissions to become even less representative of the community. This suggestion revealed an interesting conflict between “political” appointments, “merit-based” appointments, and representativeness of the general citizenry.

Some study participants reported that social and professional networks help them get appointed, while others do not. Some respondents said that they did not need to do any networking to get appointed, because they already belonged to a network. A focus group participant stated, “I got passed along because I didn’t know the right people.”

Statistically significant differences were found between the networking activities of men and women, based on their race. Among white survey respondents, women were more likely than men to use networking. Among non-white respondents, men were more likely than women to report networking.

More than 70 percent of survey respondents reported having a personal connection with the official who nominated them to serve on a board or commission. Non-white women were less likely than their peers to have a personal connection to a nominating official.
Experience on Boards and Commission

Gender diversity: No statistically significant differences were observed in the way men and women responded to this question. However, the study did control for level of “prestige” of the boards they were considering when taking the survey. Some boards had a balance between men and women serving, while others were heavily weighted toward one gender or the other. For focus group participants, though, other diversity issues seemed to be more concerning, such as age and political affiliation.

Contributing to life in the community: Differences were noted between “agree” and “disagree,” with women more likely than men to agree that the board or commission on which they serve made an impact on life in the community. Again, the issue of gender balance or imbalance on individual boards might have been reflected in these responses.

Cliques or subgroups within boards and commissions: Non-white respondents were less likely to report they “strongly disagree,” and more likely to respond that they “strongly agree” that cliques or subgroups exist on boards and commissions. Focus group participants spoke specifically of subgroups that form as a result of professional affiliations.

Success at work: When presented with the statement that service on a local government board or commission helped members to succeed at work, differences emerged between “strongly disagree” and “agree,” but not between other categories. Women were significantly more likely than men to respond with “strongly disagree” than “agree” to this statement. Likewise, white respondents were more likely, on average, than non-white respondents to strongly disagree.

Conflict: A statistically significant difference between “no conflict” and “a high degree of conflict” was observed for both race and gender. Women were statistically more likely to report a high degree of conflict than men. Additionally, white respondents were significantly more likely than non-white respondents to report a high degree of conflict. As several participants noted, conflict could result in positive outcomes, depending on how it was managed and resolved. Several respondents noted their boards or commissions had been able to manage conflict constructively.

Some respondents provided explanations for the emergence of conflict, including differing political beliefs, varying motivations for serving, non-collaborative attitudes among some participants, and differences emerging due to gender, age and racial diversity. Women were more likely than men to respond that gender differences “contributed a great deal” to conflict they experienced on a board or commission.

Reasons for leaving: A relatively small number of the study’s respondents were in the previously served category. Their reasons for leaving included expiring terms, the completion of assigned tasks, and time constraints—which were reported by both women and men. Because of the small number of respondents in this category, conclusions were not made.

Differences existed between the application process of the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, primarily that the City uses a paper application while the County provides a Web-based application. Despite these differences, no statistically significant differences between Charlotte and Mecklenburg County were found in the reported ease of application.

Study participants consistently reported dissatisfaction with not being contacted regarding applications they submitted. Many were disappointed that receipt of their applications was not acknowledged, with even an email message automatically generated by the online submission
process. Others suggested that applicants be given more specific instructions on how to proceed through the nomination and appointment process, including guidance on individual decisionmakers they should attempt to contact.

Both the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County face resource constraints that limit their staff’s ability to respond to each application or provide individual guidance to those seeking positions on advisory boards and commissions. However, establishing an auto-response for receipt of applications would be valuable in establishing good rapport with those seeking to serve.

FUTURE STEPS

Study participants articulated that some boards are stepping-stones to elected office. Future studies on gender balance should focus on exploring which local government advisory boards and commissions are considered most prestigious, and examining the makeup of those serving on elite boards. Are these boards gender balanced? Are they racially and ethnically diverse?

Further, which boards and commissions do City Council and County Commission consider most important in terms of their roles in advising policymakers? Who serves on those boards? Are they representative of the community?

Transparency is an important aspect of democratic government, particularly so in the realm of appointed, rather than elected, positions. Participants in this study stated that they would like to see a more transparent application, nomination and appointment process.

The public is not currently able to gauge the descriptive representativeness of those serving on local government advisory boards and commissions. Periodic reports should be made available that describe the makeup of these boards and commissions in terms of percentage of men and women, racial and ethnic composition and age. In this way, members of the community would be informed of City and County efforts to be inclusive in the appointment of individuals to serve on local government advisory boards and commissions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- In order to more accurately represent the community of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, efforts should be increased to ensure diversity in representation across boards and commissions.
- Develop a mentoring program for women who are currently serving on boards and commissions to encourage other women to become more actively involved.
- Include formal statements on the board/commission application and city/county website to encourage equal gender representation to help diversify the applicant pool.
- Evaluation of which boards and commissions have the most influence on policy-makers and local governance to assess whether there is equal gender representation on these boards and commissions.
- Conduct an assessment of hierarchy of boards and commissions to evaluate gender disparity on more prestigious boards/commissions viewed as political stepping-stones.
- Increase transparency in the appointment process.
• Regular, periodic evaluations and reports should be conducted to monitor the status of representation on boards and commissions in the city of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

References


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