Economic and Social Reports

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Release date: November 27, 2024

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Abstract

This study explores differences in mean annual earnings from paid employment between women and men within 11 population groups in Canada. Substantial differences were found in the gender earnings ratio within different population groups. The highest earnings ratio was observed among Black workers, where Black men had the lowest mean earnings of men in the 11 groups. The lowest earnings ratio was among Japanese workers, where men of Japanese origin had the highest mean annual earnings of all groups, surpassing those of White men. Differences in weekly hours worked and sector of employment explained substantial shares of the earnings differences between women and men in all population groups. Differences in occupational distribution further explained some of the gender earnings gaps for many groups. While the overall gender earnings ratio increased in Canada from 1996 to 2016, these gains were not distributed evenly across population groups. Southeast Asian and White women saw the biggest increases in their earnings relative to men in their population groups. There was essentially no change among Black and South Asian workers, and small declines were seen in the gender earnings ratio among Japanese, Latin American, and Arab and West Asian employees.

Keywords: gender gap, earnings, population group

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Acknowledgement

Introduction

In the early 2010s, the average annual earnings of women aged 25 to 64 in Canada, as a fraction of similarly aged men's earnings, hovered at a little above 68% (Bonikowska et al., 2019). Recent Canadian studies have also explored how the hourly wages and earnings of women from various broad subgroups of the population—immigrant, Indigenous and non-White non-Indigenous—compared with those of a common comparison group such as White Canadian-born men (Schirle & Sogaolu, 2020; Drolet & Mardare Amini, 2023). Qiu and Schellenberg (2022) looked at more disaggregated groups of younger Canadian-born workers, which showed notable heterogeneity in the weekly earnings of men and women from different non-White non-Indigenous population groups. However, gender pay gaps within more detailed population groups in Canada have not been explored directly.

This study examines earnings differences between men and women within 11 population groups. To gain a better understanding of the relative position of women in these groups in the labour force, the earnings of women in detailed population groups could be compared with, for example, those of men in the majority group, men in the group with the highest mean earnings (which may or may not be the majority group), men from the same population group, or women in the majority or highest paid population group. The group to be adopted as a reference partly depends on the objectives of the analysis, but each comparison would add another puzzle piece to the overall picture. No single comparison can tell the complete story of the earnings heterogeneity across groups if there is no consistent "gender effect" on wages or earnings across population groups or a consistent "ethnic or racial effect" by gender.

Breaking down the overall gender pay difference by population group offers new insights. First, cultural differences regarding gender roles across population groups may contribute to differences in the earnings of women from different groups and, thus, to the overall gender gap. Antecol (2001) showed that the gender wage gap in the United States varied across population groups, could not be entirely explained by differences in various individual characteristics and showed convergence to the mean among the second generation. Antecol argued that this pattern is consistent with cultural differences playing a role in explaining the overall gender wage gap in the United States. In Canada, large differences in labour force participation exist between immigrant wives from different source countries, ranging from just over 45% to over 90% (Morissette & Galarneau, 2016). These differences may extend further to weekly hours worked by women and their choice of occupation, both of which would contribute to differences in the gender pay gap across population groups. Second, comparing the earnings or wages of women from different population groups with those of men from the same groups controls for some unobservable factors more than is generally possible when comparing earnings of women from different population groups with a common comparison group, such as White Canadian-born men. For example, network effects are typically not taken into consideration in the study of gender pay gaps. However, some groups may rely on personal networks when searching for a job more than other groups, and those networks may yield different returns, in terms of the number or quality of job leads they produce (Battu et al., 2011; Pedulla & Pager, 2019). The network effect differences may be smaller when the men and women being compared are from the same population group. Similarly, while gender gap analyses generally control for differences in education level, they typically do not control for differences in education quality when immigrants who completed their education before arriving in Canada are included in the sample. Comparing men and women from the same population group would diminish such differences.

This study examines within-population-group gender differences in annual earnings among workers aged 25 to 64. Unlike studies that focus on determining whether women and men are paid equally for equal work and, thus, focus on gender gaps in hourly wages, studies that focus on annual or quarterly earnings differences between men and women instead cast a broader net. They capture also differences in labour

supply, career progression and, ultimately, lifetime earnings, as well as explore where in the lifecycle gender pay gaps appear and widen, and why this occurs.[1]

The paper proceeds as follows. The data and sample are described in the next section. The section after that presents and compares the within-population-group gender earnings ratios and the ratios of women's earnings in the different groups compared with the earnings of White Canadian-born men. This is followed by a description of individual and job characteristics among men and women in the 11 population groups studied. A decomposition of the within-population-group earnings ratios in 2016 is presented, showing the extent to which differences between men and women in observable individual and job characteristics can account for the observed differences in earnings between them. Further details on within-group gender earnings ratios that exist within sectors and occupations are provided. Finally, changes in the within-group gender earnings ratios from 1996 to 2016 are documented.

Data and sample

The analysis is based on the 2016 Census of Population linked to the Longitudinal Worker File (LWF), an administrative dataset composed of data from four sources: the T1 and T4 tax files, the Longitudinal Employment Analysis Program, and the Record of Employment. The census is the source of crucial information on population groups. There are 11 population groups examined in this study: White, Chinese, Japanese, Black, Filipino, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Latin American, Korean, Arab and West Asian.[2] Data on a rich set of individual characteristics were also drawn from the census: age, marital status, number of children younger than 18 in the census family, highest level of education, whether the highest level of education was obtained in Canada or abroad, temporary resident status, immigrant status, age at immigration, hours worked during the census reference week, occupation and location (consisting of indicators for province or territory of residence, and separately for residence in Vancouver, Toronto or Montréal).

Although each census contains information on annual earnings for the year prior to the census, this study uses 2016 earnings from the LWF instead.[3] In addition, several other variables used in the analysis were also derived from the LWF, pertaining to the main job held in 2016, defined as the job (employer rather than position) with the highest earnings. These variables are union status, firm size, sector and tenure with the employer (measured in years and derived from LWF data from 1989 to 2016).

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1. Examples of more recent Canadian studies in this area include explorations of how the gender earnings gap is affected by the different representation of women and men among top earners in the presence of increasing earnings inequality (Fortin, 2019), the so-called child penalties on women's career paths from having children (Fortin, 2019; Karademir et al., 2023), and the heterogeneity of firms (Li et al., 2020).
2. The 2016 Census of Population asked "Is this person:", followed by a list of options, more than one of which could be selected. In this study, each population group other than White consists of individuals who reported belonging only to that population group, or who reported belonging to that population group and being White. Individuals who reported belonging to two population groups other than White, to any three or more population groups, or to population groups identified only as "other – specify" were excluded from the analysis. Indigenous people were also excluded from the sample; given the unique history and experiences of Indigenous people in Canada, their outcomes warrant a separate analysis.
3. This aligns better with the information on hours worked and occupation collected via the census, which is integral to the analysis in this study. By contrast, earnings in 2015 align better with information on the number of weeks worked in 2015, and whether the work was mostly full-time or part-time. However, there is no information on hours worked or occupation.

The main sample for the analysis consists of individuals aged 25 to 64 with annual earnings from paid employment of at least $500 and no self-employment income in 2016.[4,5] Earnings were top-coded to account for outliers.[6] The sample includes Canadian-born individuals, immigrants and non-permanent residents who met the age and earnings restrictions listed above.

The gender earnings ratio

Two types of gender earnings ratios are presented in this section (Chart 1).[7] The first is a ratio of women's mean annual earnings by population group, each compared with the mean annual earnings of White Canadian-born men. This places the results in the context of earlier Canadian studies on the gender wage or earnings ratio.[8] The second type is the within-population-group gender earnings ratio, in which women's mean earnings in a given population group are compared with the mean earnings of men in the same population group.

Compared with the annual mean earnings of White Canadian-born men, White women earned an average of $0.71 for every $1.00 earned by White men in 2016. Chinese and Japanese women were not far behind, at $0.70 and $0.67, respectively. Relative earnings dropped below 60% for other groups, with Black, Filipino and South Asian women earning an average of 58% to 59% of the earnings of White Canadian-born men. Southeast Asian, Latin American and Korean women earned about 55%, while Arab and West Asian women earned an average of about 53%.

When comparing women's earnings with those of men in the same population group, one salient observation is that the relationship between the within-group gender earnings ratios and the gender earnings ratios relative to White Canadian-born men is not linear across population groups. For example, Chinese women earned about $0.78 for every $1.00 earned by Chinese men, on average—a higher proportion than when compared with White men. Meanwhile, Japanese women earned $0.59 for every $1.00 earned by Japanese men, on average—a lower proportion than when compared with White men. Compared with men in their own population groups, Black and Filipino women earned at least 20 percentage points more than when compared with White Canadian-born men. In all remaining groups (other than White), women's average earnings were closer to those of men in their own group than to average earnings among White Canadian-born men. The percentage point differences in the two gender ratios varied by group, ranging from 10 to 19 percentage points.[9]

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4. Employers are not obligated to issue T4 slips for employee earnings of less than $500.
5. Some studies restrict the sample to, for example, full-time full-year workers. This is typically done to get closer to the concept of hourly wages and abstract from gender differences in labour supply when data on hours worked are not available but are the preferred metric. However, this study casts a broader net and aims to measure gender differences in pay that may stem from differences in the incidence of part-time employment. Data on weeks worked in 2016 are not available in the census but are available for 2015. This information will be used in a robustness check exercise later in the paper.
6. The 99.5 percentile value was calculated from the overall distribution of earnings among those aged 16 and older with earnings of at least $500.
7. Pay differences between men and women are usually presented either as pay ratios (the ratio of women's mean, or median, pay to men's pay, or, put differently, how many dollars women earn for every dollar men earn, on average) or pay gaps (the difference between men's and women's pay as a percentage of men's pay).
8. Population groups are ordered in descending order of the ratio of mean annual earnings of women in these groups relative to mean annual earnings of White Canadian-born men. This ordering is used in all tables and charts throughout the study regardless of the outcome examined.
9. Gender earnings ratios in median earnings across population groups were not substantially different in magnitude from those in mean earnings. Furthermore, regardless of the metric used, the highest gender ratios were observed among Black, Filipino, Chinese and Southeast Asian employees (in this order), and the lowest gender ratio was observed among Japanese employees, with the remaining groups moving one or two places in the ranking depending on the metric used.

The discrepancy between the two gender earnings ratios shown in Chart 1 arises from the fact that the ranking of population groups by average earnings is different among men than it is among women. Chart 2 shows the average earnings of men and women in each population group underlying the within-population-group gender earnings ratio. The lowest gender earnings ratio was observed among workers of Japanese origin, at 59.0%. Although the observed mean annual earnings of Japanese women were by no means the lowest of all population groups studied, the mean annual earnings of Japanese men were the highest, surpassing the mean earnings of White men, who came in second. The gender earnings ratio ranged from 67.4% to 69.3% among South Asian, Arab, West Asian and Latin American workers, respectively, just below the gender earnings ratio of 70.6% observed among White workers. The highest gender earnings ratio was observed among Black workers. While Black women had the eighth-highest mean annual earnings out of the 11 groups examined, Black men had the lowest mean annual earnings among men in the 11 groups.

Chart 1
Average annual earnings of women as a percentage of average annual earnings of men in two comparison groups, workers aged 25 to 64, by population group, 2016
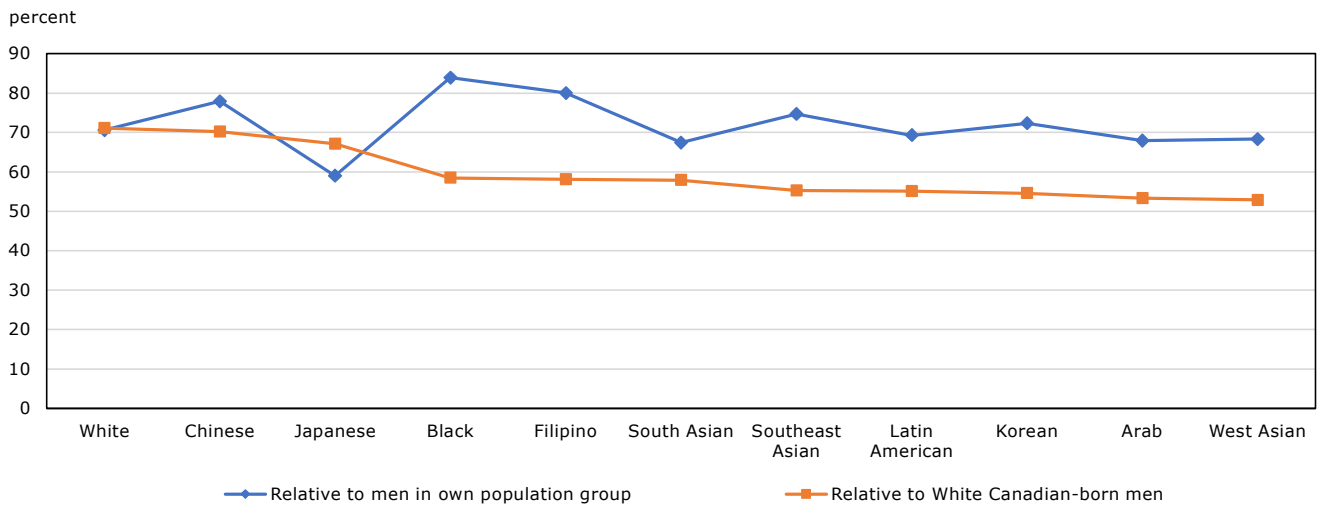
Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population and Longitudinal Worker File.

Chart 2
Average annual earnings and gender earnings ratio, men and women aged 25 to 64, by population group, 2016

annual earnings (dollars)   earnings ratio (percent)
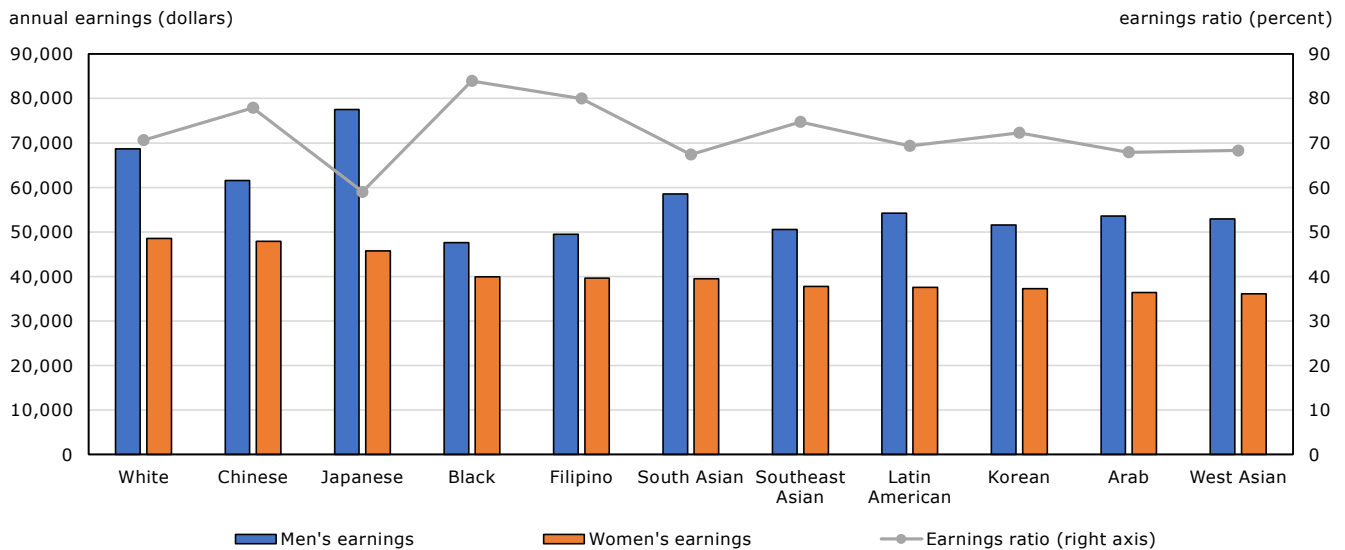
Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population and Longitudinal Worker File.

Descriptive statistics

The differences in gender earnings ratios observed across population groups may result from varying degrees of gender differences in sociodemographic and job characteristics (tables 1 and 2). Higher proportions of White and Filipino women had university degrees, compared with men in these groups, by a substantial margin: 31.0% versus 23.1% among White workers and 48.3% versus 37.8% among Filipino workers. These differences were either smaller or non-existent among other groups. Notable differences in the proportions of workers with a high school diploma or less were also observed between men and women among Black, Filipino and Latin American workers, with higher proportions of men than women having completed no more than a high school diploma. Among Black workers, this difference was offset by higher proportions of women than men obtaining a college or trades credential, while among Filipino workers, higher proportions of women had university degrees. Similar proportions of men and women obtained their highest postsecondary credential within each population group, with two exceptions. A higher proportion of Black women than Black men with a postsecondary credential had completed that credential in Canada (79.0% versus 67.5%), while the opposite was true among Japanese workers—59.2% of Japanese women with a postsecondary credential completed that credential in Canada, compared with 74.2% of men. The latter difference may be related to a gap in immigrant status between Japanese men and women; 45.6% of Japanese women were immigrants, 22.1 percentage points higher than among Japanese men. The corresponding difference between Black men and women was 2.4 percentage points, and differences among other population groups were similarly low.

Because the focus of this study is on annual earnings, differences in weekly hours worked between men and women will play an important role in accounting for the earnings differences between them. Women who worked during the census reference week were less likely to work full time than men in all population groups. While the majority of women worked full time, this proportion varied more among women than among men across population groups. Full-time rates were lowest among Arab, West Asian, Japanese and Korean women, ranging from 76.0% to 76.6%. The biggest gender difference in full-time employment was observed among Japanese workers, at 16.3 percentage points, followed by Arab, Korean and West Asian workers, respectively. At the other end of the scale, Filipino women were the most likely to work

full time (87.1%), resulting in the smallest gender difference in full-time employment, 6.3 percentage points.

Aside from weekly hours worked, differences in job characteristics may play an important role in accounting for gender differences in earnings.[10] Women were more likely than men to work in a unionized job in almost all population groups, with the highest gender gaps observed among Black (40.5% versus 31.2%), White (35.3% versus 27.7%) and South Asian (22.9% versus 15.6%) workers. By contrast, South Asian men and women had similar employment rates in unionized jobs, ranging from 19% to 20%. Women were also generally more likely than men to be employed by large employers (500 employees or more) in most population groups, with a gap of 6 to 9 percentage points among White, West Asian, Black, South Asian and Latin American workers.

Differences in occupation and sector of employment are further factors that likely contribute to the varying levels of gender differences in earnings across population groups. Occupational distributions varied across population groups, and in notable ways between men and women within some population groups but not others. For example, while women in all groups were more likely than men to work in personal and customer information services, particularly high proportions of Filipino (44.2%), Southeast Asian (33.0%) and Black (32.8%) women were employed in these types of occupations.[11] These groups also saw the highest gender differences in the proportion employed in these types of occupations (with higher proportions of women than men), at 19.2, 14.6 and 13.4 percentage points, respectively.

Filipino and Southeast Asian women were less likely than women in other groups to work in professional occupations, at 12.2% and 15.3%, respectively, but so were the men in these groups (9.6% and 14.9%, respectively).[12] The biggest gender gaps in the proportions working in professional occupations (with higher proportions of women than men) were found among White (23.9% versus 15.2%) and Black (20.1% versus 15.6%) workers. The biggest gender gaps that favoured men were smaller in magnitude, ranging from 2 to 3 percentage points, and were found among Korean, Chinese, West Asian and South Asian workers.

In all population groups, men were more likely to work in management positions (middle or senior management) than women. Among men, the highest proportion of workers in management positions was found among Korean and Japanese workers, at 18.8% and 18.3%, respectively, and the lowest among Filipino men, at 5.2%. The biggest gender difference in the proportion of workers in this occupation group was observed among Japanese workers, at 8.4 percentage points, and the smallest among Filipino workers, at less than 1 percentage point.

Women in all groups were equally likely as men, or less likely, to work in occupations in manufacturing and utilities. Here, the largest gender gap was found among Filipino workers, with 5.9% of women and 17.8% of men employed in such occupations. Finally, 4% or less of women in all population groups worked in industrial, construction and equipment operation trades; as workers and labourers in transport and construction; and in natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations. The proportion of men who worked in these occupations varied widely across population groups, from as little

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10. Wage differences by union status, firm size, industry and occupation are well documented in the labour economics literature.
11. Among women employed in this occupation group, overall, the five most common detailed occupational categories (4-digit National Occupation Classification) were nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates; food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations; other customer and information services representatives; light duty cleaners; and elementary and secondary school teacher assistants.
12. Among women employed in this occupation group, overall, the five most common detailed occupational categories (4-digit National Occupation Classification) were registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses; elementary school and kindergarten teachers; financial auditors and accountants; secondary school teachers; and human resources professionals. By contrast, among men employed in this occupation group, overall, the five most common detailed occupational categories were information systems analysts and consultants; computer programmers and interactive media developers; financial auditors and accountants; secondary school teachers; and mechanical engineers.

as 11% to 12% of Chinese and Korean men to one-fifth to one-third of White, Black, Filipino, South Asian, Southeast Asian and Latin American men.

Different population groups were also distributed differently across sectors. Again, varying degrees of gender differences in sector concentration were observed across groups. Women were more likely to work in the health care and social assistance sector than men. This was particularly true of Black and Filipino women, who were more likely than women in other groups to work in the sector and far more likely than their male counterparts to do so: 33.5% of Black women worked in the sector (versus 7.6% of Black men), as did 30.6% of Filipino women (versus 8.5% of Filipino men). White women were a distant third place, with 20.8% employed in the sector. The educational services sector also generally employed higher proportions of women than men: 14.3% of Arab women, 13.5% of Japanese women and 12.8% of White women, proportions that were several percentage points higher than for men in each of these groups. By contrast, 2.6% of Filipino women worked in this sector, as did 2.4% of Filipino men. While lower proportions of women than men worked in the manufacturing sector overall, a large gender gap was observed in two groups: 17.5% of Southeast Asian women worked in the sector, compared with 31.4% of Southeast Asian men, and 8.3% of Filipino women worked in the sector, compared with 25.8% of Filipino men.

Table 1

Selected characteristics, women aged 25 to 64 with earnings in 2016, by population group

	White	Chinese	Japanese	Black	Filipino	South Asian	Southeast Asian	Latin American	Korean	Arab	West Asian
						mean					
Age	44.2	42.5	42.0	41.2	42.5	40.5	41.6	40.9	41.0	39.9	39.7
						percent					
Immigrant	9.4	78.5	45.6	72.6	84.8	83.5	82.0	83.4	77.1	83.7	92.1
Temporary resident	0.5	4.6	8.6	3.6	9.2	2.9	3.8	5.1	12.6	2.7	3.7
Highest completed degree, diploma or certificate											
High school diploma or less	29.0	25.7	18.4	24.5	18.6	28.8	46.2	26.6	17.9	19.5	21.8
Trades or college credential	39.9	21.4	34.5	46.5	33.0	21.4	25.9	35.6	24.3	29.0	22.5
University degree	31.0	53.0	47.1	29.0	48.3	49.7	27.9	37.8	57.8	51.6	55.7
Highest completed degree, diploma or certificate obtained in Canada (among those with a postsecondary credential)	93.5	66.6	59.2	79.0	26.6	47.0	72.8	55.8	45.7	53.7	52.1
Married or common law	68.7	68.3	67.7	47.6	68.3	78.7	65.8	65.9	68.2	72.5	66.5
Presence of children aged 0 to 17 in census family	36.8	36.7	36.8	48.3	41.8	50.0	41.7	45.7	35.9	56.6	39.1
						mean					
Number of children aged 0 to 17 (among those with children in census family)	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.9	1.6
						percent					
Worked at least 30 hours during census reference week (if hours over 0)	83.2	85.7	76.5	82.5	87.1	82.6	85.6	82.1	76.6	76.0	76.5
						mean					
Hours worked (if hours over 0)	36.2	37.0	34.8	36.4	38.0	36.2	37.3	35.9	35.1	33.8	34.6
						percent					
Occupation											
Management	10.4	9.6	9.8	5.1	4.5	7.7	6.2	7.4	13.5	9.1	8.0
Professional	23.9	28.5	25.0	20.1	12.2	21.6	15.3	17.8	21.2	27.1	27.4
Technical and paraprofessional	11.0	8.3	10.4	11.8	8.9	8.7	6.5	11.6	11.8	15.1	12.4
Administration and administrative support	22.9	19.1	21.1	16.3	13.8	16.7	13.0	18.6	13.1	16.3	12.7
Sales	8.7	9.4	7.4	7.7	9.0	11.3	7.1	8.9	10.9	10.2	15.4
Personal and customer information services	18.2	18.1	23.8	32.8	44.2	21.4	33.0	28.4	27.0	19.1	20.1
Industrial, construction and equipment operation trades; workers and labourers in transport and construction; and natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	2.6	1.3	1.4	2.0	1.5	3.9	4.0	2.2	1.0	1.0	1.0
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	2.4	5.9	1.2	4.2	5.9	8.6	14.8	5.3	1.6	2.2	3.1

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population and Longitudinal Worker File.

Table 1

Selected characteristics, women aged 25 to 64 with earnings in 2016, by population group (continued)

	White	Chinese	Japanese	Black	Filipino	South Asian	Southeast Asian	Latin American	Korean	Arab	West Asian
Characteristics of main job in 2016						mean					
Tenure with employer (years)	8.8	6.9	6.9	6.3	5.9	5.9	6.3	5.5	4.5	5.0	4.6
						percent					
Unionized job	35.3	18.9	23.5	40.5	29.6	22.9	19.9	26.1	15.9	26.4	19.8
Firm size											
1 to 24 employees	21.5	29.4	30.4	11.6	23.8	22.9	32.7	21.3	45.0	27.9	26.2
25 to 99 employees	12.4	12.8	14.5	10.9	11.9	11.8	13.4	14.2	12.1	12.3	12.1
100 to 499 employees	12.3	11.9	12.0	15.4	15.9	13.3	13.8	15.4	9.5	10.6	12.5
500 or more employees	53.7	45.7	43.1	62.0	48.2	51.8	39.7	48.8	33.2	48.9	48.9
Sector											
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; and utilities	2.0	1.6	1.7	0.6	0.9	2.0	2.7	1.7	0.8	0.6	0.6
Construction	2.5	1.5	1.2	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.9	1.0	1.6	2.0
Manufacturing	5.8	9.7	5.2	5.0	8.3	9.4	17.5	8.8	4.1	4.8	5.8
Wholesale trade	3.4	5.8	4.0	2.6	3.0	4.1	4.8	4.1	3.3	3.3	3.2
Retail trade	11.1	10.6	10.3	7.2	10.7	11.6	8.7	10.5	16.7	14.0	18.6
Transportation and warehousing	2.8	2.4	3.4	2.7	2.1	4.5	1.5	3.2	2.3	2.3	1.6
Information and cultural industries	1.7	2.4	2.1	2.1	1.1	2.0	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.7
Finance and insurance, and management of companies and enterprises	6.3	10.4	5.7	6.3	5.7	8.3	5.0	6.2	5.3	6.6	6.9
Real estate and rental and leasing	1.5	2.2	1.5	1.5	3.3	1.2	1.6	1.8	1.9	1.4	1.2
Professional, scientific and technical services	5.7	9.6	7.9	3.8	4.1	6.8	5.4	6.6	6.6	6.7	9.4
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	3.4	3.7	3.8	9.2	4.8	7.4	4.4	9.6	3.1	5.6	4.1
Educational services	12.8	6.9	13.5	7.0	2.6	7.3	3.6	7.7	7.8	14.3	10.3
Health care and social assistance	20.8	12.6	14.5	33.5	30.6	16.5	11.9	18.6	13.9	19.0	17.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.2	0.9	1.5	0.7	0.9	0.4	0.9	1.1	1.4	0.7	0.6
Accommodation and food services	5.0	10.4	13.0	5.5	13.1	9.4	13.1	6.8	20.7	6.2	8.5
Other services (except public administration)	3.9	3.4	4.8	3.6	4.7	3.1	11.9	4.6	5.7	5.0	4.5
Public administration	10.0	5.9	6.0	8.0	3.1	4.8	4.1	5.0	3.8	6.1	4.0

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population and Longitudinal Worker File.

Table 2
Selected characteristics, men aged 25 to 64 with earnings in 2016, by population group

	White	Chinese	Japanese	Black	Filipino	South Asian	Southeast Asian	Latin American	Korean	Arab	West Asian
						mean					
Age	44.0	42.7	42.8	40.9	41.9	41.0	42.9	41.1	40.8	40.9	40.6
						percent					
Immigrant	9.3	75.5	23.5	70.2	85.4	81.2	81.3	81.1	75.3	84.8	91.2
Temporary resident	0.7	4.6	9.1	6.0	5.6	6.1	3.1	7.7	13.2	4.4	4.7
Highest completed degree, diploma or certificate											
High school diploma or less	35.0	25.3	23.3	35.0	28.0	28.5	48.4	33.8	18.3	21.3	26.9
Trades or college credential	41.9	20.2	30.2	36.0	34.1	20.9	27.0	32.6	23.8	27.5	20.1
University degree	23.1	54.6	46.5	29.0	37.8	50.6	24.7	33.6	57.9	51.2	53.0
Highest completed degree, diploma or certificate obtained in Canada (among those with a postsecondary credential)	92.4	66.8	74.2	67.5	29.8	45.3	78.4	52.2	50.2	51.8	52.8
Married or common law	69.6	70.4	65.5	58.9	78.5	77.9	66.8	69.4	69.6	72.4	68.4
Presence of children aged 0 to 17 in census family	34.7	37.5	32.6	40.9	48.3	48.7	38.5	40.4	38.0	54.2	40.3
						mean					
Number of children aged 0 to 17 (among those with children in census family)	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.7
						percent					
Worked at least 30 hours during census reference week (if hours over 0)	94.2	92.8	92.8	90.7	93.4	93.4	92.6	93.1	89.7	90.4	89.4
						mean					
Hours worked (if hours over 0)	41.9	39.8	41.4	39.8	40.4	41.1	39.9	40.5	40.2	39.4	40.0
						percent					
Occupation											
Management	14.8	13.4	18.3	6.4	5.2	13.1	7.7	9.5	18.8	15.0	14.0
Professional	15.2	31.3	25.3	15.6	9.6	23.9	14.9	17.7	24.4	25.7	30.0
Technical and paraprofessional	9.8	9.1	10.3	8.9	8.8	7.1	8.1	8.8	9.5	8.7	8.2
Administration and administrative support	6.4	7.0	6.8	9.4	7.9	7.3	6.4	7.4	5.9	6.8	4.9
Sales	6.1	7.0	6.4	6.5	6.0	7.2	4.4	5.1	7.6	7.9	8.4
Personal and customer information services	8.9	15.4	14.5	19.4	25.0	12.7	18.4	16.3	19.1	14.7	12.1
Industrial, construction and equipment operation trades; workers and labourers in transport and construction; and natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	32.3	11.3	15.2	23.9	20.7	20.9	22.3	26.3	11.7	15.4	16.7
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	6.6	5.6	3.3	10.0	17.0	7.9	17.8	8.9	3.0	5.9	5.6

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population and Longitudinal Worker File.

Table 2
Selected characteristics, men aged 25 to 64 with earnings in 2016, by population group (continued)

	White	Chinese	Japanese	Black	Filipino	South Asian	Southeast Asian	Latin American	Korean	Arab	West Asian
						mean					
Characteristics of main job											
Tenure with employer (years)	8.7	6.8	8.1	5.6	5.9	5.9	7.5	5.6	4.6	5.1	4.9
						percent					
Unionized job	27.7	15.2	19.0	31.2	27.3	15.6	19.2	22.6	11.7	22.6	15.5
Firm size											
1 to 24 employees	24.4	29.6	24.9	13.7	13.6	27.8	25.6	21.6	42.7	26.2	31.4
25 to 99 employees	15.7	14.1	15.7	13.5	16.4	12.9	17.2	17.9	14.4	13.4	13.9
100 to 499 employees	14.8	12.6	15.2	17.2	19.9	13.8	17.7	17.8	10.7	14.2	13.4
500 or more employees	45.0	43.3	43.9	55.3	49.9	45.2	39.2	42.3	32.1	45.7	40.9
Sector											
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction; and utilities	5.7	2.2	3.8	2.0	2.2	2.2	3.1	3.7	1.5	1.6	1.7
Construction	13.2	4.1	5.2	6.3	4.5	4.6	5.0	11.4	4.5	5.9	8.1
Manufacturing	15.3	13.3	10.8	15.3	25.8	15.1	31.4	18.0	8.0	13.1	13.4
Wholesale trade	6.5	7.6	8.0	5.7	6.7	5.8	6.1	6.3	6.3	5.6	5.5
Retail trade	8.5	10.1	8.4	7.3	9.8	9.3	7.6	7.0	13.8	12.2	11.9
Transportation and warehousing	6.3	3.8	5.6	7.3	5.0	11.2	2.8	5.2	4.6	4.4	4.7
Information and cultural industries	2.5	4.2	3.6	3.3	2.3	3.5	2.5	3.2	3.1	3.8	3.3
Finance and insurance, and management of companies and enterprises	3.5	8.3	5.3	4.8	3.5	7.1	3.4	4.3	5.9	5.3	4.5
Real estate and rental and leasing	1.6	1.7	1.3	1.7	2.1	1.4	1.2	1.9	1.5	1.6	1.5
Professional, scientific and technical services	6.4	12.3	9.1	5.1	4.0	10.5	6.3	8.3	9.1	9.7	11.5
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	4.6	3.4	4.8	13.2	5.9	7.6	4.4	8.6	4.2	7.9	6.2
Educational services	4.9	4.6	6.8	4.5	2.4	3.0	2.2	4.1	4.5	5.7	7.8
Health care and social assistance	3.8	4.4	4.7	7.6	8.5	4.1	3.7	4.0	4.1	5.4	4.6
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.2	0.8	1.2	0.8	1.1	0.5	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.6
Accommodation and food services	3.0	11.6	10.4	4.2	10.0	6.9	10.4	5.4	17.8	7.0	7.9
Other services (except public administration)	3.4	2.7	3.2	3.6	3.2	2.7	5.4	3.4	6.1	3.7	3.1
Public administration	9.6	5.2	7.9	7.3	3.3	4.7	3.6	4.5	4.1	6.6	3.7

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population and Longitudinal Worker File.

Decomposing the within-population-group gender earnings ratio

Gender differences in individual characteristics, job characteristics and labour supply (weekly hours worked) documented in the previous section contribute to the observed earnings differences between men and women within the various population groups. How much of the gap can be accounted for by such differences and how does this vary across groups? To answer this question, an Oaxaca–Blinder

decomposition was conducted on the earnings difference between women and men for each population group.[13]

The total portion of the within-population-group gender earnings difference that could be accounted for by differences in observed individual and job characteristics varied from 31% (representing $2,354 in annual earnings) among Black workers and among White workers (representing $6,311 in annual earnings) to nearly three-quarters for Korean workers (representing $10,402 in annual earnings).

Two factors stand out as most important in accounting for the observed differences in pay between men and women in all population groups.

The first is weekly hours worked. As shown in tables 1 and 2, average weekly hours worked were lower among women than men in all population groups, whether because of a higher incidence of part-time employment among women or because of fewer hours of overtime worked, which in turn could lead to less overtime pay (where applicable) and potentially fewer bonuses (Grund, 2015).[14] Differences in weekly hours worked explained from 16% of the differences in earnings between women and men (or $5,189) among Japanese workers to 34% (or $2,630 in annual earnings) among Black workers.[15]

The second factor was the sector of employment. Differences in sector of employment accounted for from 10% of the difference in earnings among Japanese workers (representing $3,232) to 40% among Black workers (representing $3,101).

Differences in the distribution of occupations among women and men accounted for more than 10% of the pay difference among West Asian, South Asian, Chinese, Korean and Japanese workers. Among White workers, differences in occupations accounted for very little of the gap, while among Black workers, differences in occupational distribution predicted higher earnings for women than men. Occupational differences that favoured women were also observed among Filipino workers, accounting for 8% of the pay difference. In addition, differences in education level that favoured Filipino women (rather than men) implied that the pay gap should be smaller than that observed.

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13. The decomposition takes the following form:

$$\overline{Earnings_{W,g}} - \overline{Earnings_{M,g}} = \left(\overline{X}'_{W,g} - \overline{X}'_{M,g} \right) \hat{\beta}^* + \left[\overline{X}'_{W,g} \left(\hat{\beta}_{W,g} - \hat{\beta}^* \right) - \overline{X}'_{M,g} \left(\hat{\beta}_{M,g} - \hat{\beta}^* \right) \right] \qquad (1)$$

where $\overline{Earnings}$ is the mean annual earnings of a particular population and gender group; the subscripts W, M and g refer to women, men and population group, respectively. $\overline{X}$ is the vector of mean values of the explanatory variables included in the model. The coefficients $\hat{\beta}_{W,g}$ and $\hat{\beta}_{M,g}$ are estimated in regressions run separately for women and men in a particular population group P, respectively. Meanwhile, $\hat{\beta}^*$ is a vector of coefficients estimated in a regression model where data on workers in all 11 population groups, both men and women, were pooled together; indicators for gender, population group, and interaction terms between gender and population group were included in the model. The first term on the right-hand side of the equality sign in equation (1) represents the "explained" component of the difference in earnings; it is the share of the gap that stems from a difference in observed characteristics between men and women from a given population group, multiplied by the same vector of coefficients (the mean earnings return to these characteristics estimated from a pooled regression model). The "explained" component can be broken down further into the contribution of differences in characteristics for subgroups of the variables included in the model. The second term in equation (1) is referred to as the "unexplained" component.

14. Bonuses and overtime pay are included in total earnings recorded on T4 forms and are not observable separately from base salary.

15. The models do not account for the number of weeks worked because this information is not available for 2016. Gender earnings ratios calculated using only data on workers who worked full time during the census reference week increased substantially over those shown in Chart 2. When the sample was further restricted to individuals who had worked full time, full year in 2015, further increases were very modest for most groups, often about 1 percentage point.

Firm size differences generally accounted for a small proportion of the observed pay differences, with a couple of exceptions. These differences favoured women (rather than men) in several groups, accounting for the most substantial proportion of the pay difference for Black women. By contrast, firm size differences explained 13% of the earnings gap between Filipino women and men. Differences in tenure with employer between men and women also generally did not explain much of the observed earnings differences, with the exception of Black workers, where differences in tenure predicted higher pay among women than men.

Table 3

Decompositions of the difference in annual earnings between women and men, by population group, 2016

	White	Chinese	Japanese	Black	Filipino	South Asian	Southeast Asian	Latin American	Korean	Arab	West Asian
						dollars					
Difference in average annual earnings between women and men	-20,200	-13,605	-31,736	-7,665	-9,877	-19,067	-12,816	-16,640	-14,310	-17,201	-16,788
Total portion explained	-6,311	-6,753	-15,161	-2,354	-4,537	-8,909	-7,683	-6,542	-10,402	-9,262	-8,600
						percent					
Total portion explained	31	50	48	31	46	47	60	39	73	54	51
						dollars					
Portion explained by											
Age	117	137	163	81	242	87	-140	-10	334	-273	-157
Family status	134	-45	225	-100	-598	172	113	115	-52	245	-2
Education	1,049	-418	60	-178	1,219	-234	395	444	-333	-302	-4
Highest education obtained in Canada	331	-22	-453	829	12	55	-68	336	-185	132	113
Immigrant status	18	-158	-1,157	243	-178	342	-288	47	-121	423	134
Weekly hours worked	-3,791	-2,840	-5,189	-2,630	-2,047	-4,895	-2,620	-3,845	-4,235	-4,628	-4,479
Tenure (in years)	64	61	-979	516	45	31	-952	-23	-30	-78	-252
Unionized job	-40	-19	-24	-49	-12	-38	-4	-18	-22	-20	-23
Firm size	921	192	-756	696	-1,319	1,017	-832	476	-169	-54	1,140
Sector	-4,646	-1,572	-3,232	-3,101	-2,703	-2,971	-2,285	-3,335	-2,613	-3,144	-2,907
Occupation	-343	-2,075	-3,840	1,201	828	-2,578	-1,115	-773	-2,868	-1,634	-2,254
Location	-132	-9	-14	130	10	88	139	43	-94	48	55
Missing information on job	6	16	36	8	-38	15	-25	1	-15	25	36
Unexplained	-13,889	-6,852	-16,575	-5,311	-5,340	-10,158	-5,133	-10,098	-3,908	-7,939	-8,188

Notes: In the models underlying the Oaxaca–Blinder decompositions, family status includes indicators for being in a common-law relationship, separated or divorced, widowed, or single (with married being the reference category) and for having one, two, or three or more children aged 0 to 17 in the census family (with no children being the reference category). Education includes indicators for the highest level of education completed: high school diploma or less, trades certificate, college diploma or certificate, and certificate or degree above bachelor's degree (with bachelor's degree being the reference category). Immigrant status includes indicators for being a temporary resident, for being an immigrant and for age at immigration. Firm size includes indicators for 1 to 24 employees, 25 to 99 employees and 100 to 499 employees (with 500 or more employees being the reference category). There are 39 occupational categories and 19 sector categories. Indicators for missing information were also included in the models. Components may not add up to the total because of rounding.
Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population and Longitudinal Worker File.

Gender earnings ratios across sectors and occupation groups

Differences in sector of employment between men and women played a substantial role in explaining earnings differences between them, as shown in the previous section, and this section documents differences in pay between men and women in different population groups within sectors (Table 4).

The gender earnings ratios were, on average, highest and varied least across population groups among public administration employees, ranging from mid-70% to mid-80%. Similarly high ratios were also observed among employees in educational services, with the exception of Arab employees, where women earned on average 66.5% of what men earned in that sector. More variation in the gender earnings ratio was observed in the health care and social assistance sector, with the highest ratio at 86.1% among Filipino workers and the lowest at 56.3% among Arab workers.

Table 4

Gender earnings ratio, workers aged 25 to 64, by sector and population group, 2016

	White	Chinese	Japanese	Black	Filipino	South Asian	Southeast Asian	Latin American	Korean	Arab	West Asian
						percent					
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	64.5	71.8	F	71.7	67.2	51.5	86.3	77.2	F	F	F
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	79.3	74.1	F	86.6	86.2	69.1	87.1	74.7	F	F	F
Utilities	75.9	83.5	F	68.5	71.1	69.3	F	75.2	F	F	F
Construction	71.7	81.4	66.9	75.7	73.1	68.7	87.4	70.7	67.9	66.7	76.9
Manufacturing	72.7	71.0	47.1	79.3	80.9	63.9	74.0	73.1	65.8	76.0	68.4
Wholesale trade	74.2	73.8	57.7	86.5	81.9	66.7	67.8	72.4	76.4	71.3	72.0
Retail trade	64.3	77.3	63.2	69.5	77.2	61.7	77.7	64.0	79.9	67.7	61.7
Transportation and warehousing	72.6	83.4	73.9	78.5	80.9	73.7	80.6	74.7	65.2	77.2	81.6
Information and cultural industries	73.9	78.8	71.5	83.8	79.4	68.6	72.9	75.4	71.8	74.9	77.4
Finance and insurance, and management of companies and enterprises	57.9	78.1	61.8	76.7	77.3	68.5	76.3	65.6	79.0	69.1	68.0
Real estate and rental and leasing	67.6	82.8	F	71.8	66.3	69.7	66.8	68.3	94.9	77.9	74.0
Professional, scientific and technical services	65.0	71.1	57.2	80.6	64.0	63.5	74.3	64.9	74.4	63.2	65.6
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	77.5	80.6	60.0	78.7	85.0	63.5	78.6	74.4	81.4	80.2	74.4
Educational services	80.2	85.1	77.6	89.5	83.1	73.2	82.7	75.7	86.7	66.5	76.9
Health care and social assistance	74.5	70.6	67.4	81.0	86.1	65.2	77.6	74.5	62.7	56.3	62.8
Arts, entertainment and recreation	77.0	91.1	F	71.7	86.0	68.0	82.0	76.2	85.4	69.8	68.5
Accommodation and food services	70.1	84.3	61.2	82.1	83.1	69.5	83.6	76.3	74.4	70.0	69.1
Other services (except public administration)	69.2	76.8	71.9	87.1	72.1	71.9	67.3	67.0	70.1	68.7	66.7
Public administration	79.6	84.9	74.6	81.8	83.0	77.5	81.3	78.2	84.5	82.2	78.5

F too unreliable to be published

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population and Longitudinal Worker File.

Sorting into different occupations within sectors may explain part of the differences in average earnings between men and women across sectors. Although sample sizes would not allow for a detailed examination of occupational distributions within sectors by population group, Table 5 shows how gender pay ratios compare across broad occupation and population groups. Workers in administration and administrative support and in personal and customer information services registered relatively high gender earnings ratios that varied relatively little across population groups. High gender earnings ratios were also observed in professional and management occupations, with more variation across population groups. For example, the gender earnings ratio among Chinese workers in management occupations was 90.9%, but it was 65.0% among Japanese workers.

By contrast, technical and paraprofessional occupations recorded substantially lower earnings ratios than professional occupations for all population groups. Some of the lowest gender earnings ratios were found among workers in sales, ranging from 49.0% to 75.4%. Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations, as well as occupations in manufacturing and utilities, also registered below-average (across occupation groups) gender earnings ratios for many population groups.

Table 5

Gender earnings ratio, workers aged 25 to 64, by occupation and population group, 2016

|	White	Chinese	Japanese	Black	Filipino	South Asian	Southeast Asian	Latin American	Korean	Arab	West Asian
						percent					
Management	74.0	90.9	65.0	86.3	79.2	77.8	83.6	75.3	82.5	82.4	81.6
Professional	75.2	81.9	67.2	91.9	93.1	76.8	85.2	73.6	87.7	71.6	78.0
Technical and paraprofessional	62.6	74.5	58.2	74.2	77.1	62.2	73.6	63.3	67.5	53.6	63.2
Administration and administrative support	75.6	83.5	71.8	92.6	88.3	77.6	85.3	81.5	75.7	81.8	79.7
Sales	55.5	72.3	49.0	69.2	75.4	59.3	70.9	57.8	66.0	62.6	55.6
Personal and customer information services	74.9	90.0	71.6	88.2	82.6	78.3	80.8	78.4	80.6	75.1	77.6
Industrial, construction and equipment operation trades	73.8	80.4	F	82.9	73.1	69.3	71.0	72.4	F	73.6	F
Workers and labourers in transport and construction	71.4	77.9	F	73.4	75.0	71.4	76.4	70.8	F	63.1	F
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	50.0	65.3	F	74.1	72.1	42.6	79.1	74.2	F	F	F
Occupations in manufacturing and utilities	60.6	66.9	43.6	67.6	76.2	58.3	73.4	66.8	65.6	69.5	62.4

F too unreliable to be published

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population and Longitudinal Worker File.

Changes in the gender earnings ratio from 1996 to 2016

The ratio of women's mean annual earnings to those of men among workers aged 25 to 64 has increased from 1996 to 2016, moving from 64.7% to 71.0% overall. However, these relative gains were not distributed evenly across population groups (Chart 3).[16] The biggest increase in women's mean annual earnings relative to those of men was observed among Southeast Asian employees, rising by 8.1 percentage points from a base of 66.6%, followed by White workers, rising by 6.6 percentage points from a base of 64.0%. Smaller increases were also observed among Korean, Chinese and Filipino employees. Essentially no change was observed for South Asian and Black workers. Meanwhile, the gender earnings ratio fell by nearly 3 percentage points from a base of 70.9% among Arab and West Asian workers, with smaller declines registered among Latin American and Japanese workers. Mean real earnings (in 2016 dollars) increased for men and women in each group from 1996 to 2016. The differences in direction of the changes in gender earnings ratios across groups stem from whether women's or men's average earnings increased faster over this period.

Chart 3
Gender earnings ratio, workers aged 25 to 64, by population group, 1996 and 2016

percent
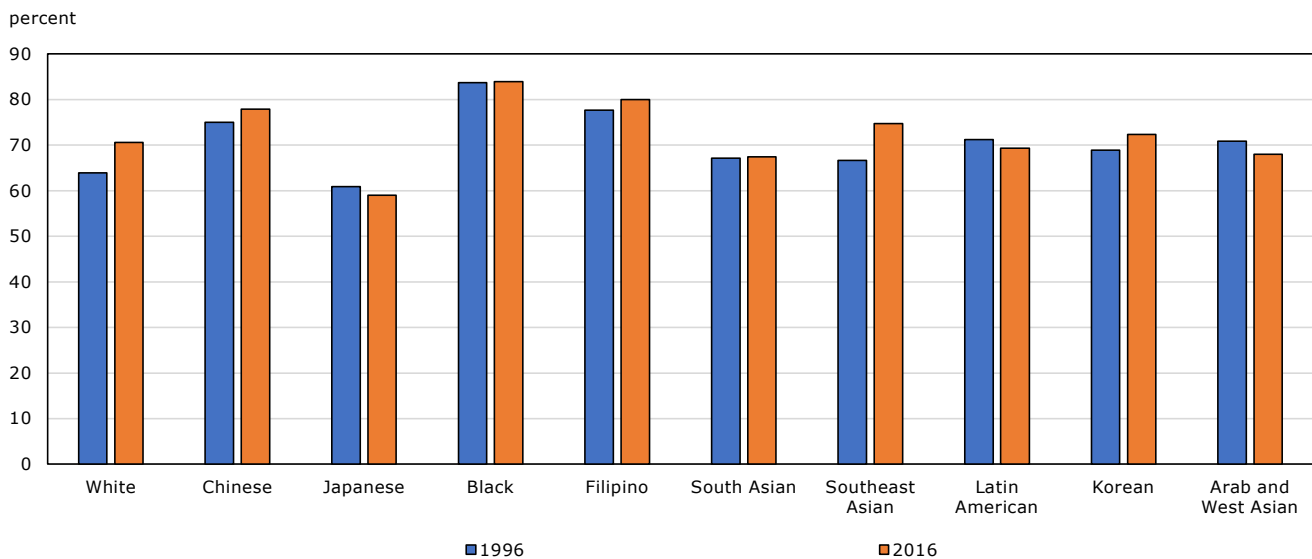
Sources: Statistics Canada, 1996 and 2016 censuses of population, and Longitudinal Worker File.

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16. Arab and West Asian individuals are combined in this analysis because they are not identified separately in the 1996 Census data.

Conclusion

Although much has been written about the evolution of the gender pay gap in Canada, no studies have looked explicitly at how the gender pay gap varies by population group in Canada. Cultural differences that lead to varying levels of labour supply of women across population groups—at least among immigrants, but also possibly among subsequent generations raised in Canada—are one factor that could contribute to varying differences in the annual earnings of women and men from different population groups.

This study fills this gap in the literature by exploring differences in average annual earnings from paid employment between women and men within 11 population groups. The within-population-group gender earnings ratios varied from 59.0% among Japanese workers to 83.9% among Black workers. Black women recorded mean earnings that were higher than those of women from several other groups, while Black men had the lowest mean earnings of men in the 11 groups. By contrast, among Japanese workers, men had the highest mean annual earnings of all groups, and women had mean annual earnings that surpassed the mean across all groups. Women in the various population groups ranked differently when their earnings were compared with those of White Canadian-born men instead. Japanese women fared better in this comparison than they did relative to Japanese men. All other groups fared worse, by varying amounts.

Differences in weekly hours worked and sector of employment explained substantial shares of the earnings differences between women and men within all population groups. Occupation differences also explained non-trivial portions of the gaps for many groups.

While the gender earnings ratio has increased in Canada from 1996 to 2016, these gains were not distributed evenly across population groups. Southeast Asian and White women saw the biggest increases in their earnings relative to their male counterparts. There was essentially no change for Black and South Asian workers, and small declines were observed in the gender earnings ratios for Japanese, Latin American, and Arab and West Asian workers.

Looking ahead, gender earnings ratio estimates by population group among individuals aged 25 to 64 in 2019 and 2021 (not reported) showed relatively little change from the 2016 estimates. For some groups, the gender earnings ratio fell somewhat over time, while for others it increased. However, these small changes could be due to differences in sample composition driven by data availability or temporary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. More data will be needed to explore the longer-term evolution of the within-population-group gender earnings ratios since 2016.

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