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## Women want what men have: Good-paying jobs

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By Eileen Connolly-Robbins

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A new report by the Pew Research Center underscores how far women have come in their educational achievements and career aspirations, but it also points to the reality that still awaits many women in the workplace.

Women now outnumber men in both college enrollment and completion and they make up almost half of the workforce. But when it comes to pay, women still lag significantly behind – earning about 81 percent of what men earn.

As I am sure you can assume, that pay disparity is not for lack of wanting. The Pew report found, for instance, that more young women than young men place a high importance on having a well-paying job, a reversal of what the trend used to be. Two-thirds of women ages 18 to 34 who were surveyed for the report said that being successful in a high-paying career or profession was “one of the most important things” or “very important” in their lives, compared with 59 percent of young men. There also has been an increase over the past 15 years in the percentage of middle-aged and older women who value a well-paying career.

The Pew report is based on a survey that asked women and men about their attitudes toward work and family, and it compared 2010-11 findings to past trends. It found that women’s increasing desire for a successful career does not mean they aren’t interested in marriage and family.

“For men and women of all ages, being a good parent and having a successful marriage continue to rank significantly higher on their list of priorities than being successful in a high-paying job or career,” the report said. “Thus the increased importance women are now placing on their careers has not come at the expense of the importance they place on marriage and family.”

The Pew report is filled with a wealth of interesting statistics. Among the educational trends:

n About 44 percent of women ages 18 to 24 were enrolled in college or graduate programs as of October 2012, compared with 38 percent of men in the same age group.

n Thirty-six percent of women ages 25 to 29 have a bachelor’s degree, compared with 28 percent of men in that age category.

Among the workplace trends:

n In 2010, the average weekly paycheck for women who were full-time or salaried was \$669, compared with \$824 for their male counterparts. Think about that... the difference translates into a loss of \$8,060 a year!

n The wage gap is smaller for younger workers. Women ages 16 to 34 earn 90 percent of what men do. Middle-aged and older women earn 80 percent or less of what their male counterparts make. It’s not clear whether the trend toward

more equitable wages for younger women workers will continue as they advance in their careers.

Among the family and marriages trends:

n Thirty-seven percent of young women list marriage as one of their highest priorities, compared to 29 percent of young men.

n Young adults are marrying and having children at later ages than ever before. The average age for first marriage for women is now 27. The average age of first-time mothers is 24.

n Seventy-one percent of women with children under 18 work outside the home.

n Forty-eight percent of married couples in 2010 consisted of two wage-earners, down from 53 percent in 1997.

So what are some of the take-home messages from the Pew report? Given the fact that there are so many talented women with undergraduate and graduate degrees, companies have no excuse for not having a diverse pool of job candidates and employees. Likewise, employers are wrong to assume women, whether they have families or not, don't want more demanding, high-powered assignments. The Pew survey clearly shows that women aspire to well-paying jobs, just like men do. In addition, I find it reassuring that both sexes still value their personal relationships above all else.

SPW is an organization full of these ambitious women who thrive off of high-powered assignments, so it's an excellent venue to grow both personal and professional relationships. I constantly hear stories of business deals that come to fruition, mentoring relationships that flourish and career opportunities that raise individuals to the next level. It makes sense that these relationships are so beneficial; after all, we do business with those whom we can connect with and who think like us. Join us for our next event on June 21, where we will be hearing from Wawa's chief marketing officer, Carol Jensen, who will share some of Wawa's marketing secrets. Please visit [spwmainline.com](http://spwmainline.com) to register for this event or to learn more about other upcoming events. I hope to see you June 21.

*Eileen Connolly-Robbins is executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Main Line Chamber of Commerce and founder of its Society of Professional Women.*

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