

Pay gap between male and female RNs has not narrowed

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An analysis of the trends in salaries of registered nurses (RNs) in the United States from 1988 through 2013 finds that male RNs outearned female RNs across settings, specialties, and positions, with no narrowing of the pay gap over time, according to a study in the March 24/31 issue of *JAMA*.

Fifty years after the Equal Pay Act, the male-female salary gap has narrowed in many occupations. Yet pay inequality persists for certain occupations, including medicine and nursing. Studies have documented higher [salaries](#) for male [registered nurses](#), although analyses have not considered employment factors that could explain salary differences and have not been based on recent data, according to background information in the article.

Ulrike Muench, Ph.D., R.N., of the University of California, San Francisco, and colleagues examined salaries of males and females in nursing over time using nationally representative data from the last 6 (1988-2008) quadrennial National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses (NSSRN; discontinued in 2008) and data from the American Community Survey (ACS; 2001-2013).

The NSSRN sample included 87,903 RNs, of whom 7 percent were men; the ACS sample included 205,825 RNs, of whom 7 percent were men. Both surveys showed that male RN salaries were higher than female RN salaries during every year. No significant changes in female vs male salary were found over time. Analysis estimated an overall

adjusted earnings difference of \$5,148.

The salary gap was \$7,678 for ambulatory care and \$3,873 for hospital settings. The gap was present in all specialties except orthopedics, ranging from \$3,792 for chronic care to \$6,034 for cardiology. Salary differences also existed by position (such as for middle management, nurse anesthetists).

"The roles of RNs are expanding with implementation of the Affordable Care Act and emphasis on team-based care delivery. A salary gap by gender is especially important in nursing because this profession is the largest in health care and is predominantly female, affecting approximately 2.5 million women. These results may motivate nurse employers, including physicians, to examine their pay structures and act to eliminate inequities," the authors write.

More information: [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2015.1487](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2015.1487)

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