

Statistics

in focus

POPULATION AND
SOCIAL CONDITIONS

THEME 3 – 6/1999

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Women's earnings in the E.U: 28% less than men's

Marie-Paule BENASSI

In the European Union in 1995, on average the gross monthly earnings of a woman was 72% the earnings of a man. This is based on female and male full-time employees in all economic activities except agriculture, education, health, personal services and administration.

This discrepancy should primarily be interpreted as the result of comparing averages for two populations of employees with very different characteristics: women and men

Firstly: women and men do not have the same jobs. In the population under review, one third of women working full time are office clerks while only 10% of men are, whereas 47% of men are manual workers or plant operators while only 18% of women are. On average manual workers are better paid than office clerks.

Secondly: working women are on average younger: 44% are less than 30 years old compared to 32% of men. This is due to the fact that there are less of the older generation of women working and that many women stop working to raise children and may only restart after several years, if at all. The consequence of this dissimilar age structure is that women on average have less seniority and less of an opportunity to be in management positions. This, in turn, makes an impact on their average salary level.

Thirdly: there is a difference in the education level and the type of education. 51% of working women have no more than a primary or general secondary level of education compared to 43% of men. On the other hand, 36% of men have a technical secondary education compared to 29% of women. This is also reflected in average salaries which are higher for a more technical education.

There are also other gender differences in the employee structure, for the main part in the type of industries where women are working and the number of overtime hours they are paid. There is a correlation between these differences and the different job structure of women and men referred at above. For example overtime hours are mainly paid to manual workers, the majority of whom are men, while most sales persons in the retail trade, one of the lower paying economic branches, are women.

Because of all the factors creating those structural differences and because these factors are often interrelated, it is very difficult to interpret overall averages to answer the question of whether women are paid less for equal work. To do so requires comparisons at very detailed levels, especially of occupations and the management positions within those. Such detailed analysis is not possible with the figures generally available. However a conclusion that can be drawn from the overall averages is that women are not in equal work positions, they are in lower paid positions.

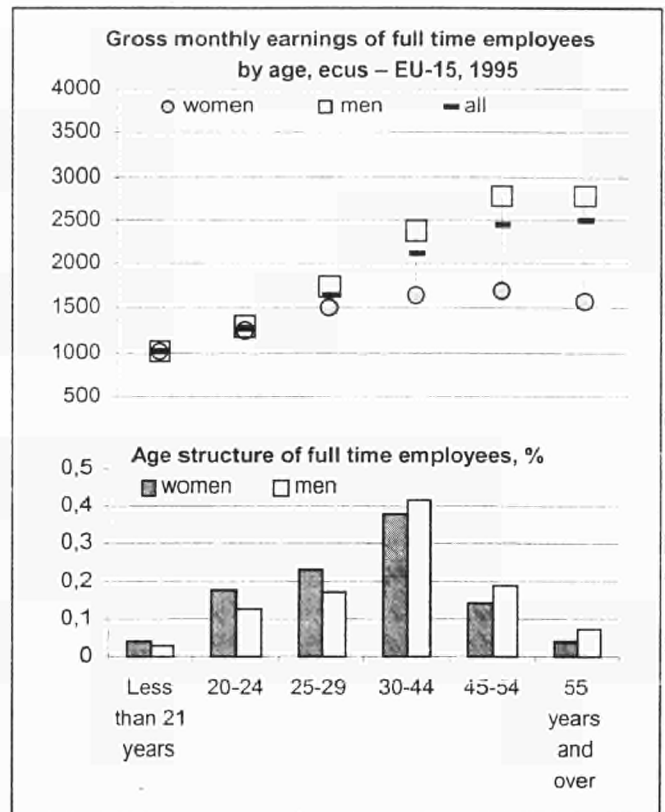
The following pages highlight the major differences of earnings between women and men and how the various structural factors impact on pay differentials. The statistics used are the results of a European survey on the structure of earnings that was carried out in a comparable way in all EU Member States in 1995 (see methodology on page 7 for more details on the survey).



A GENERATIONAL EFFECT?

The difference in pay between women and men are often wrongly referred to as a generation effect that will progressively be offset when women from older age groups who had less easy access to scientific or technical education and thus to certain type of occupations are replaced by the younger generation. Looking at pay differences by age (chart) shows that pay differences between women and men increase rapidly with age. This is mainly due to the occupational structure of older women which is more concentrated on office clerks than the average.

If the very young seem to be nearly equally paid, women's earnings are on average 86% of those of men in the 25-29 age group. In principle women from this age have had equal access to education and work but very probably maternity leave (or employers fears on future leave) are beginning to make an impact on their career development. This figure shows that even for the younger generation there is unequal access to well paid jobs. Furthermore, when these young women get older, some will make long career breaks and so it is very probable that the pay differences will increase and resemble the ones their mothers are currently experiencing. Future surveys will show how the pay differences will evolve.

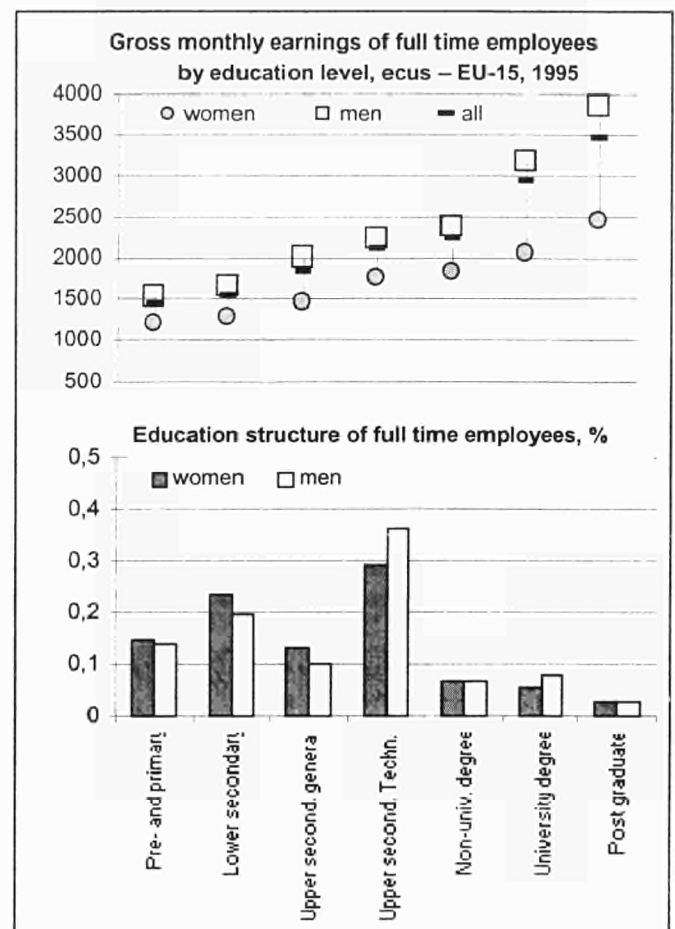


AN EDUCATIONAL EFFECT?

When comparing earnings of women and men according to their level of education, it appears that pay differences increase with the education level.

The differences are approximately 20% for the lowest levels of education due to both the different occupational and the seniority structure i.e. most of the men concerned are manual workers, while the women are clerks or sales persons.

Pay differences are particularly high for university graduates and post graduates, standing at approximately 35%. For these persons the generational effect is strong alongside the difference in detailed occupations: female degree holders being on average much younger than male and in these categories seniority can mean very high salaries.



PAY DIFFERENCES BY OCCUPATION: WOMEN ARE SYSTEMATICALLY LOWER PAID

When viewing earnings by broad occupational categories there are also major differences between women and men. This is due partly to the lower average seniority of women and also to the fact that there are very few women who exercise personnel or financial management responsibilities in their occupations.

It is also due to the lack of detail on available occupational categories. For example, the category office clerks which is mainly female, covers both secretaries (low paid) who are quasi exclusively women and accounting clerks (better paid) who are women and men. The averaging of both categories together pushes the women figure downwards.

The following differences can be seen:

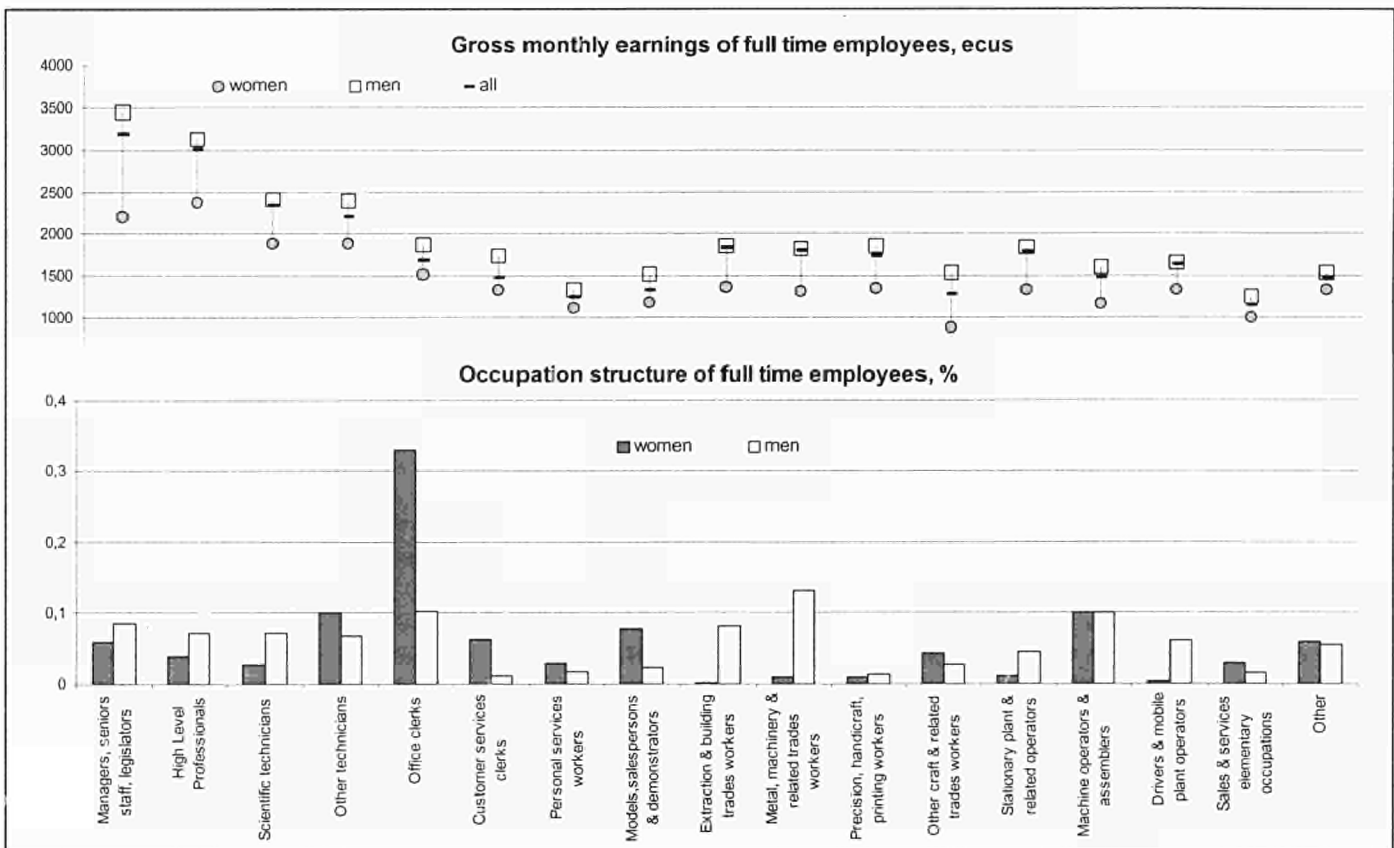
- The greatest differences are found in the best paid occupations and this is to be related to the same pattern found when looking at pay differences by educational level.
- The category managers and senior staff also includes corporate managers. There are very few women at the top level where salaries can be extremely high. This in turn pushes the male averages upwards.

- In categories where a technical or scientific background is required (scientific technicians or craft and related trade workers for example), the difference in earnings lies between 22 to 28%. This can mostly be related again to lack of seniority.

- Differences in pay levels are smallest in traditional "female" occupations where there are as many or more women than men.

- The clerks categories, where most women work are less paid than the manual workers categories where mainly men work.

The three last conclusions are important because they concerns many women and men. Education statistics show that there are still few girls in the technical or scientific branches so in the future the share of women in the manual workers category or in occupations with a high technical content will not change considerably. This means that average figures for earnings will continue to show the fact that women are highly concentrated in certain occupations which are often the lowest paid.



ARE INEQUALITIES IN WOMEN'S EARNINGS SIMILAR IN ALL EU MEMBER STATES?

All the conclusions identified for EU averages are true in all EU Member States, even though the general situation seems more balanced than the EU average in Sweden, in the Eastern Länder of Germany, in Denmark, Luxembourg and Belgium and less balanced in Greece, the Netherlands, Spain and Austria (see table).

The average gross hourly wages of women working on a full-time basis represents in general 76.3% of those of men in the EU. In the new Länder of Germany, the average wages of women are equivalent to almost 90% of men's and in Sweden 87%. In Greece, on the other hand, women's wages represent only 68% of men's and in the Netherlands, 70.6%.

Any comparison of the inequality structure by occupation between Member States has to be done with caution because there exist different national practises of classifying occupations. The inequality is especially large among managers in ten out of fifteen Member States. In France, Austria, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom women working as clerks have the most equal earnings compared to men's. Basic manual occupations are the most equally paid professions in the Federal Re-

public of Germany as it existed before October 1990, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands whereas the category 'technicians and associate professionals' are the most equally paid in Belgium, Spain, and Luxembourg.

Comparing the inequality structure by age shows that for the older generation there are more differences between the Member States than for the younger one, reflecting different traditions in women's work. Inequalities increase more rapidly with age in Greece, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and UK.

The effect of education on the pay differences between genders is not homogeneous in the Member States. In Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden, the highest qualified women are the most unequally paid compared to their male colleagues. The opposite is true in the new Länder of Germany, and Greece. In the Federal Republic of Germany as it existed before October 1990, Portugal, Finland and the United Kingdom, the level of education has minimal influence on wage differences.

Gross hourly wages of women as a % of men's,

Full-time earnings, bonuses excluded, 1995

	B	DK	D(1)	D(2)	EL ¹	E	F ²	I	L	NL	A ³	P	FIN	S	UK
TOTAL	83.2	88.1	76.9	89.9	68.0	74.0	76.6	76.5	83.9	70.6	73.6	71.7	81.6	87.0	73.7
By occupation															
Legislators, senior officials and managers	73.0	74.9	68.7	79.2	77.9	70.2	67.6	73.8	67.3	62.0	67.1	74.9	81.4	78.5	67.6
Professionals	82.0	86.5	80.4	84.2	70.7	78.4	79.1	83.7	83.6	74.0	79.9	88.9	84.0	87.8	83.7
Technicians and associate professionals	85.5	80.1	73.2	79.6	73.4	82.8	85.6	82.0	87.7	72.0	72.9	84.7	78.2	86.5	73.3
Employees	74.6	72.3	66.9	72.3	67.0	65.0	63.3	69.0	72.8	63.1	63.6	69.8	72.6	78.4	64.4
Clerks	83.9	84.9	79.7	83.9	78.1	77.1	91.4	78.8	83.5	75.3	80.2	83.7	93.7	96.1	92.7
Service workers, shop and market sales workers	79.5	84.6	69.1	74.0	64.1	78.0	87.7	81.8	81.0	71.1	77.7	83.1	86.0	95.1	82.2
Manual workers	81.3	85.5	74.4	77.2	65.8	72.0	79.7	76.2	67.3	70.6	69.0	68.3	79.9	90.6	70.1
Craft and related trades workers	83.4	90.9	75.7	75.6	59.3	70.7	80.0	76.7	78.9	74.9	69.0	62.9	81.3	91.3	62.1
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	78.8	88.5	78.8	80.1	70.9	73.3	79.7	74.9	68.2	68.1	72.5	72.6	81.7	95.1	76.4
Elementary occupations	84.0	83.9	81.4	82.2	80.7	82.5	86.5	83.9	81.1	76.0	76.2	83.0	82.7	88.5	81.0
By age⁴															
Less than 21 years	78.6	97.6	79.4	80.0	93.7	88.2	106.1	93.4	91.6	88.4	83.9	91.6	87.6	108.4	84.5
Between 20 and 24 years	86.1	89.6	83.0	91.2	85.7	84.7	98.9	89.8	96.3	85.5	76.9	86.5	83.9	90.9	79.4
Between 25 and 29 years	90.9	90.0	85.4	90.9	81.8	86.6	94.1	86.1	97.6	85.2	80.4	79.5	84.0	89.3	81.4
Between 30 and 44 years	86.6	82.8	77.7	87.8	69.2	78.6	77.5	80.7	86.0	81.0	72.4	73.5	79.0	84.6	69.0
Between 45 and 54 years	82.3	77.6	70.6	84.6	58.6	75.8	69.8	71.4	71.8	66.3	68.5	72.2	74.6	78.5	57.6
55 years and more	73.7	78.2	69.0	80.9	55.9	71.8	66.4	68.5	68.0	67.9	55.9	67.4	72.5	77.1	61.5
By educational levels⁵															
Lower secondary or less	81.2	86.7	78.9	82.8	63.0	73.7	77.5	78.0	81.6	73.4	71.5	70.8	80.9	85.0	71.0
Secondary education	82.9	86.7	78.2	89.1	69.9	74.4	81.6	73.6	80.8	68.7	74.5	73.0	81.6	84.2	70.7
Tertiary education	71.5	76.1	78.4	84.3	67.1	65.3	68.1	60.3	74.5	60.9	60.3	73.0	82.7	77.9	71.3

¹ Industry only ² 1994 ³ 1996 ⁴ monthly salaries including bonuses ⁵ monthly salaries excluding bonuses

WHEN DISCARDING THE MAJOR STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCES A GAP OF 15% REMAINS !

As shown above, it is difficult to compare broad averages of earnings between women and men. It is even more difficult to compare averages between Member States because the economic activity structures are different, the share of women and men in the different occupation or education levels are different and the numbers of women working in each age groups is different too (in Northern countries many more women in the older age groups work than in the Mediterranean ones for example).

The best solution is to try to reduce as many structural differences as possible by applying a common structure to both groups. The chart below shows how inequality ratios evolve when the male structures are applied to women's average hourly earnings.

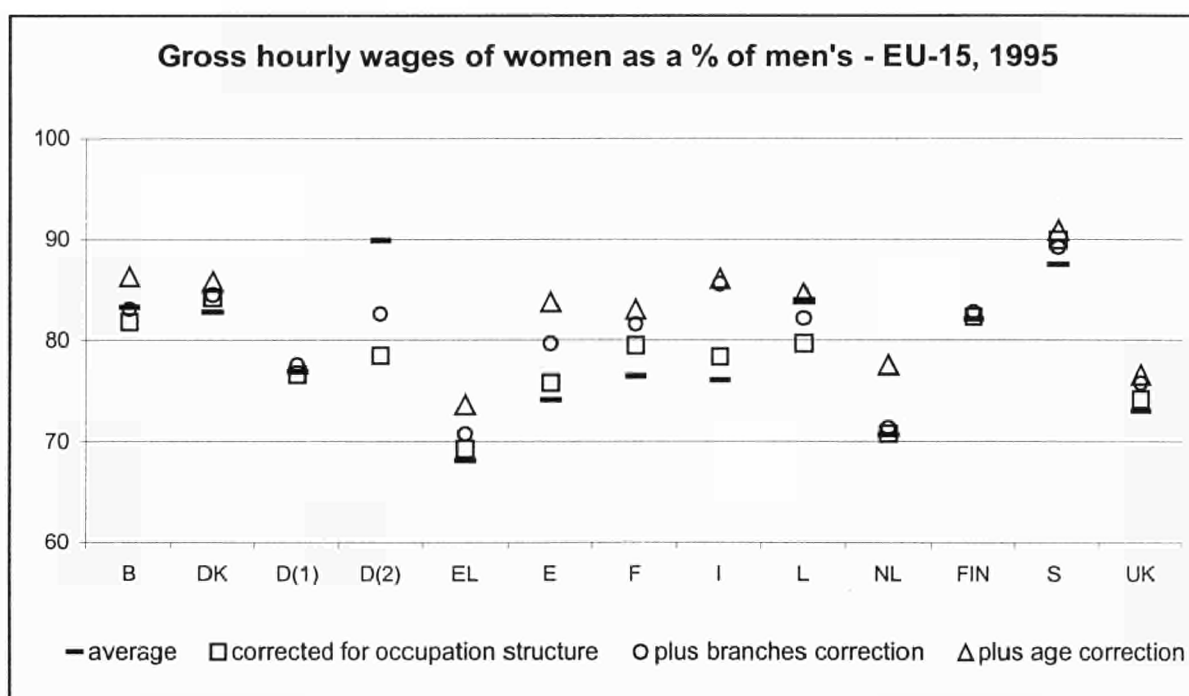
When men's distribution by occupation is taken for women, the earnings differences between sexes are reduced for all the Member States except Belgium, the new Länder of Germany and Luxembourg. In these countries, the difference between women and men's earnings actually increases after the recalculations due to the fact that many women are occupying well paid positions in the higher paid activities. In financial services in Belgium and Luxembourg for example, the relative share of such well-paid occupations is lower in male occupation structure.

When women's wages are recomputed in order to eliminate both the effects of economic activity and profession, the situation remains almost untouched in the Federal Republic of Germany as it existed before October 1990, while equality in Spain, France and particularly in Italy and Portugal improves a lot. The

most equal countries by gender following Sweden are now Italy, Denmark and Portugal, the Netherlands and Greece being the most unequal.

When men's age structure is further applied (not possible in all countries due to data constraints), there is an additional improvement in the ratio, the greatest being in Spain, The Netherlands, Greece, Belgium and France. Most of the Member States are presenting ratios close to 85% at the end of the exercise. With the exception of Sweden being higher, and Greece, the Netherlands and UK being significantly lower.

It can be puzzling to see that after recalculating women's earnings to remove the three major structural effects: age, occupation and economic activity of the employer, there still remains differences of about 15 % in average earnings of women and men. This shows either that women are paid less for equal work or that structural differences are not completely corrected, or both which in fact is probably the case. If figures would allow us to go further the main structural differences that would have to be looked at are linked to seniority and to the actual personnel or financial management responsibilities attached to the various occupations. In our statistics, age is only a rough approximation of seniority especially for women who have had breaks in their careers, whilst the occupation categories do not tackle the question of the level of managerial responsibilities. It is clear that both aspects should be addressed carefully.



A FEW WORDS ON OTHER INEQUALITIES

More overtime hours for men but overtime paid more equally

The normal working paid time for full-time employees ranges from 37 to 42.5 hours per week according to the Member States. The average number of hours paid per week is higher among men than among women. The difference in hours paid between women and men is in general more than one hour.

An important factor, which explains this difference is overtime. Twice the number of men work overtime compared to women. The overtime hours worked by men are two to six times greater than those worked by women. Germany, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom have a very high average of overtime hours and there exists a major disparity between women and men. Luxembourg is particularly high with almost five overtime hours on average per week for men and 1.5 hours for women.

The divergence between the hourly wages of women and men is smaller at the level of overtime than at the level of normal hours in all the countries except in the new Länder of Germany. Women working overtime earn in general 84% to 96% of men's earnings, the exceptions being Greece, Austria and Portugal where women's overtime wages are equivalent to 74.7% to 78.5% of men's. The EU15 average is 87.5%.

Part time work: many more women

All of this article has been concerned with full time employees in order to be able to directly relate women and men's pay. But a factor that should be kept in mind is that overall averages would show a much greater inequality between women and men if part timers would be taken into account. In the economic activities under review 12% of jobs are part-time and 80% of those jobs are occupied by women. This means that nearly 30% of women are part-timers. The situation is very different amongst the Member States with more than 55% of women and 10% of

men working part-time in the Netherlands, approximately 25% of women and men in Denmark, while in many countries very few men work part-time.

There is less earnings inequality between gender amongst part-time compared to full-time employees in all Member States except Spain, France, Luxembourg and Austria. Wages are almost equal between part-time women and men in Denmark (98,5%). In Finland part-time women's average hourly wages are 95.9% of those of men and in Belgium 94,7%.

More spread in men's wages

The distribution of hourly wages is in general less balanced amongst men than amongst women when comparing the highest decile earnings with the lowest decile earnings (= interdecile ratio) or by studying the Gini indexes of wages. This reflects the fact that there are more men with extremely high salaries than women.

The interdecile ratio shows that the distribution of men's hourly wages is markedly less well balanced than that of women throughout all Member States except in the new Länder of Germany and in Luxembourg. Men's hourly earnings are most unevenly distributed in Greece, France and in Italy compared to women's earnings.

The Gini index, ranging between 0 and 1, is larger when the distribution of the variable under consideration is more unbalanced, i.e. a few individuals hold a major part of the mass of wages. It is noted that as the Gini index of men's wages is higher than that of women in all Member States; the distribution of earnings is therefore more imbalanced among men, in particular in Greece, France and Italy. Luxembourg has the smallest difference in the Gini and women and men's earnings are most balanced in Sweden.

Gini indices, SES 1995 data

	B	DK	EL ¹	E	F ²	I	L	S	UK
Women	0.1878	0.1726	0.1776	0.2715	0.2623	0.1783	0.2332	0.1249	0.2697
Men	0.2143	0.2230	0.2560	0.2985	0.3297	0.2423	0.2370	0.1735	0.3134
Total	0.2123	0.2122	0.2572	0.3002	0.3121	0.2362	0.2396	0.1612	0.3108

¹ Results of industry ² year 1994. Not all countries are covered due to the lack of detailed source data

THE STRUCTURE OF EARNINGS STATISTICS (SES)

Structure of Earnings statistics relating to the year 1995 were collected during 1996 in every Member State of the European Union, together with Norway and Iceland (as exceptions, the reference years for France and Austria are respectively 1994 and 1996). Data has been collected by the mean of sample survey of employers or from available information in appropriate registers. The average EU-15 figures presented here are calculated by weighting the earnings with the number of employees in Member States.

The statistics exclude persons who are self-employed or who work in local units employing less than ten people, and also employees in agriculture and fishing, public administration and defence, education, health and social work, other community, social and personal service activities, private households or extra-territorial organisations (together with certain other exceptions on a national basis). The coverage of the survey is not ideal to study women's earnings because sectors where there are a majority of women are not covered: health, education and personal services. The earnings differences between genders are probably slightly less important in these categories but at the same time the average earnings are lower which in turn would lower women's overall averages.

Persons employed as trainees are excluded here because their lower rates of pay would distort the averages.

Figures for the Federal Republic of Germany as it existed until 3rd October 1990 (pre-unification) and the new Länder of Germany (including East Berlin) are presented separately as D(1) and D(2) because of the different economic development of the two parts of Germany.

Information on structures (by occupation, by age, by education level) presented in this paper relates to the survey population. They might slightly differ from other survey results because of different coverage and also different definition and collection methods.

The Structure of Earnings Statistics includes information on hourly, monthly and annual earnings. The SES data and complete methodology may be consulted on demand, in part or in full, from Eurostat's New Cronos database accessible via Eurostat datashops.

This issue is the third in the series presenting the results of the 1995 Structure of Earnings Statistics. The first issue, published at the end of 1997 (Statistics in Focus, Population and social conditions, 1997/15), gave the detailed results for Spain, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom while the second issue, which was published in July 1998 (Statistics in Focus, Population and social conditions, 1998/8), included the detailed data from eleven countries.

Further information:

➤ Reference publications

Title	Employment in Europe 1998	Social portrait of Europe 1998
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For information on methodology

Marie-Paule Benassi, Eurostat/E1, L-2920 Luxembourg, Tel: (352) 4301 32297, Fax: (352) 4301 34415
Contributions from Veijo Ritola and Brigitte Delville, Eurostat/E1; Cecile Vampouille, Toulouse university
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