

# **Wage Disparity and Other Women's Issues in Wyoming**

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**For the Women of the Mountains International Conference  
March 8 – March 10, 2007  
Orem, Utah, U.S.A.**

## ***Introduction***

The Wyoming Council for Women's Issues (WCWI), established in 1965, has a vision to improve the quality and equality of life for women in Wyoming. The WCWI members are volunteers, appointed by the Governor, from across the state; the Council also has one ex-officio member from the Wyoming Business Council. The Council is bipartisan and receives funding from the legislature for operational expenses.

In 2002, the WCWI was charged by the Wyoming Legislature to oversee an independent study of wage disparity in Wyoming. Wyoming was reported to have the largest wage difference between men's and women's full-time and salary workers in the U.S.; at that time, Wyoming women's earnings were 62.6 percent of men's (Henderson & Saulcy, 2001). *A Study of the Disparity in Wages and Benefits Between Men and Women in Wyoming* (Alexander 2003) investigates the causes of, estimates the economic impacts of, and discusses options for reducing, the wage gap.

The WCWI has further investigated women's issues by commissioning a survey of the women themselves. *Wyoming Women's Issues Survey, 2004* results show that issues most often reported as personal problems were health care, family, employment & wages, and child care (Taylor 2004).

The WCWI recently instituted two programs, a nontraditional job fair and the Summit Award, both aimed at improving women's wages and, as a result, lessening the difference between men's and women's wages. The job fair has been established to encourage young women to pursue education and employment in fields that are both in demand and pay well in Wyoming. The Summit Award recognizes businesses that provide family-friendly and workforce-friendly programs, such as on-site childcare, that enable employees to be more productive and meet both job and family obligations more efficiently, and enable women to move into jobs that otherwise may have been an unacceptable strain on their families.

This discussion is organized around the results of the survey commissioned by the WCWI and incorporates the results of the wage disparity study.

## ***Wyoming Women's Issues Survey, 2004***

The WCWI contracted with the University of Wyoming's Survey & Analysis Center (WYSAC) to conduct a telephone survey that would provide information on the priority issues for women living in Wyoming. (For information on questionnaire development and the sample, please see the Wyoming Women's Issues Survey 2004 on the WCWI website: [www.wyomingwomenscouncil.org](http://www.wyomingwomenscouncil.org))

The survey focused on possible problem issues experienced by respondents themselves, as does this discussion. The survey also included one question about respondents' perception of serious problem issues for women in their community.

The top four issues that women felt were serious problems for women in their communities were: substance abuse (70.1%), employment (68.4%), domestic violence (65.4%), and health care (63.4%). The top four personal problems for women, according to the survey, were health care, family, employment & wages, and child care. Thus, two of the issues perceived as serious issues for women in the community are not reflected as the most prevalent personal problems—substance abuse and domestic violence (19.3 percent of the women said that substance abuse was a personal problem for them and 4.2 percent of the women said that they had personal problems with domestic violence). These indications, however, need to be viewed with the knowledge that substance abuse and domestic violence are typically under-reported.

### ***Problem #1: Health Care***

Health care was the most common personally experienced problem of the women surveyed. Of the 38.8 percent of the women respondents who were experiencing problems with health care, 42.5 percent cited the cost of health insurance as the problem, making this the largest issue for women in Wyoming, personally.

The cost of health care was the next most often cited problem, at 23.5 percent of the women who were having health care problems. The quality of health care was the third most cited problem, being reported by 12.5 percent of the women experiencing health care problems.

The U.S. Census Bureau Experimental Small Area Health Insurance Estimates indicate that 15.5 percent of Wyoming's population was uninsured in year 2000 (75,254 people); of the population under the age of 18, 13.9 percent were uninsured (17,478 children) (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 2005). A 2004 study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) on the status of women in Wyoming estimated that 21.9 percent of the women in Wyoming do not have health insurance. While these data may not be directly comparable, a calculation can be made that gives some indication of whether or not women make up a disproportionate number of the people without health insurance in Wyoming.

75,254 total uninsured – 17,478 uninsured under the age of 18 = 57,776 uninsured adults  
(245,408 females – 63,806 under 18 yrs) \* 21.9% uninsured = 39,771 uninsured adult women  
68.8 percent of uninsured adults are women.  
(Source of population data: U.S. Dept. of Commerce 2006e)

Clearly, women, much more often than men, have to forgo obtaining health insurance in favor of purchasing other necessities. A look at the differential between men's and women's median earnings in Wyoming indicates why. According to the 2000 Census, median earnings for full-time, year-round working women were \$21,735; significantly less than men's \$34,442 median earnings (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 2006d). This difference in median wages is discussed specifically in a following section on problems with employment and wages.

These data also indicate that women who do have health insurance coverage are likely to pay a disproportionate share of their earnings for health insurance.

Children's health care coverage is often tied to parental health care coverage. As a result, children are also a vulnerable population when low rates of health care coverage are encountered. As mentioned above, the U.S. Census Bureau, from the 2000 Census, estimates that 13.9 percent of the children under the age of 18 in Wyoming are uninsured. The WYSAC survey for WCWI found that 64.2 percent of the children of respondents had health insurance through an employer or union, 17.7 percent were insured via Medicaid or Equality Care (Title 19, Kid Care [a Wyoming state program]), 11.3 percent had other health insurance, and 5.9 percent had no health insurance.

Bureau of the Census data shows the disturbing national trend with respect to health care coverage (see Table 1.) The percentage of uninsured people in the nation is on the rise. Conversely, the percentage of the population that is covered by private health care plans is generally declining. The cost of health insurance is a national issue—not particular to Wyoming or to geographical areas. However, Wyoming does have higher than average rates of uninsured persons.

**Table 1. Trend in Health Insurance Coverage in the U.S.**

Year	Privately Insured	Medicaid	Uninsured
1990	73.2	9.7	13.9
1995	70.3	12.1	15.4
2000	71.9	10.6	14.2
2003	68.6	12.4	15.6
2004	68.1	12.9	15.7

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce 2006b.

Wyoming ranks 39<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the proportion of its population with health insurance and ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for children under the age of 18 with health insurance coverage (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 2005). According to the IWPR Status Report, Wyoming ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the proportion of women with health insurance. The challenge for Wyoming is both stemming the tide of increasing rates of uninsured people and improving its standing among the rest of the states for proportion of uninsured people.

The IWPR report also states that Wyoming women's rate of health insurance through Medicaid is 5.1 percent, substantially lower than the national rate of 8.6 percent for women (Caiazza 2004). Wyoming's poverty rates are only slightly lower than the national rate: 8.0 percent for

Wyoming families compared with 9.2 percent for U.S. families and 11.4 percent for Wyoming individuals compared with 12.4 percent of U.S. individuals (U.S. Dept, of Commerce 2006e). The IWPR report surmises that Wyoming's low rate of health insurance overall is largely related to the low rate of Medicaid coverage among those who are eligible (Caiazza 2004). Again, poverty falls disproportionately on women. In 1999, women made up 40.4 percent of the total population with incomes below the poverty level, children made up 33.0 percent, and the remaining 26.3 percent of people with incomes below the poverty level were men (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 2006c).

A factor in the low rates of public assistance health insurance coverage within the eligible population in Wyoming may be the rural landscape and mountainous geography—reaching women in parts of the state that are often isolated or too small to be distribution points for information regarding health insurance options. The IWPR report states that the majority of women in Wyoming live in non-metropolitan areas. There is also likely to be a cultural component—the independent Wyoming nature, desire for little governmental involvement in people's lives, and the negative perception of public assistance.

### ***Problem #2: Family***

Family issues were a personally experienced problem for 29.8 percent of the women surveyed. The issue that concerned women most, at 18.0 percent of those who said they were having family problems, was “communicating with teens”. The next most often cited issue was dealing with aging relatives, at 17.7 percent of the women who said they were experiencing family problems. The third most often cited issue was the need to spend more time with children (14.3 percent).

The WYSAC survey conducted for WCWI contained no additional questions that would help specifically identify the most prevalent communication issues. Two likely categories of problems are (1) bridging the generation gap and (2) at-risk and problem behavior among teens.

The WYSAC survey results yield an indicator that the communicating with teens issue may be problems with bridging the generation gap. The third most prevalent response in this section of the survey (family problems) was the “need to spend more time with children”. This response from women may be indicating a need for more or better parenting education with regard to teens. The Wyoming Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA), discussed below, provides an indicator that teens desire better communication as well.

Similarly, the WYSAC survey had a question regarding issues related to children at school. A high number of respondents (47.5 percent) who had concerns about their children's education, were concerned about drugs or alcohol, indicating that some communication with teens issues may be with at-risk or problem behavior. There are two major studies of middle and high school student behavior that could provide insight and base information for pursuing and focusing organized efforts to improve communication with teens.

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) has been administered in high schools since 1991 and in middle schools since 1999. This survey program was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and focuses on health risk behaviors that contribute to: intentional and

unintentional injuries; the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs; unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases; unhealthy nutrition, weight, and amounts of physical activity. (Castellanos 2006)

The Wyoming Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA) is a census survey of all enrolled 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in the state of Wyoming, contracted by the Wyoming Department of Health, Substance Abuse Division. The survey was initiated during the 2001-2002 school year and has been administered every other year since. Survey results indicate the level of students' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that may either contribute to problem behaviors or help guard against problem behaviors. (Canen 2006)

Both of the above mentioned surveys provide valuable information regarding both the type and likelihood of teen behavior that may be causing communication problems for the women responding to the WYSAC survey conducted for WCWI. In addition, the 2006 PNA also provided information that may alert adults to their own problem behavior that may contribute to the teen communication problem.

The Wyoming Department of Education provides "Results for Wyoming 2005 compared with US 2005" YRBS data, on its website. These results indicate Wyoming students are significantly more likely to:

- Ride in a vehicle without a seat belt.
- Drive a vehicle when they have been drinking.
- Carry a weapon.
- Be physically abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Be forced to have unwanted sexual intercourse.
- Contemplate suicide.
- Use tobacco products.
- Use alcohol.
- Use illegal drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine.
- Use a needle to inject an illegal drug into their body.
- Use birth control pills to prevent pregnancy.
- Avoid obesity problems and have healthy views of their own weight.
- Eat vegetables and drink milk.

The Wyoming PNA provides some insight into certain at-risk behaviors. The Wyoming PNA states, "12<sup>th</sup> grade students had the highest at-risk rates based on Parents' Favorable Attitudes toward Drug Use and Rewards for Antisocial Behavior". The Wyoming PNA also states "nearly 55% of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and 35% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who reported consuming alcohol said that their last alcoholic beverage came from their parents".

The PNA also looks at attitudes, beliefs and perceptions that decrease the likelihood of substance use and problem behavior; these are called "protective factors". Students in Wyoming, according to the PNA, reported feeling like their accomplishments and appropriate behaviors were not being recognized and rewarded—neither in the community nor in school.

The Wyoming culture is also a factor in some of the risk behaviors identified above. While Wyoming has a mandatory seat belt law, law enforcement officers are prevented from enforcing the law by itself. Wyoming allows open containers of alcohol in vehicles while traveling. The prevalence of hunting in Wyoming makes the carrying of a weapon, even for children, a normal part of daily life.

Contemplation of suicide is reflective of the overall suicide rates in Wyoming. The 2006 Wyoming Family Photo, using data from the American Association of Suicidology and CDC, showed that Wyoming had the highest suicide rate in the U.S. for 2002 and 2003. 2004 data from the American Association of Suicidology shows Wyoming dropped from having the highest suicide rate (1<sup>st</sup>) to a ranking of 5<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. (McIntosh 2006).

Student's substance abuse rates for tobacco products and alcohol are likely related to the cultural acceptance of these substances for adults and by adults. At the same time, however, recall that over 70 percent of the women surveyed by WYSAC for WCWI said they thought substance abuse was a serious problem for women in their communities—these responses could be related to alcohol or illegal drugs, and probably both.

Methamphetamine is a substance abuse problem that has been getting a lot of attention in the media and by the states. The fact that Wyoming students have a significantly higher rate of illegal drug use is cause for serious concern. There is an abundance of literature that describes the explosion of substance abuse, particularly methamphetamine, in rural areas. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services 2006), Wyoming was tied with Nevada for the highest percentage of lifetime methamphetamine use for people 12 years and older, 2002-2004.

The combined information in these surveys indicate that adults need to examine the unconscious messages being sent by their own behaviors, as well as working to modify problem behaviors on the part of teens. Examples of possible mixed messages are:

- (1) The value of seatbelts in saving lives, yet many parents value individual use neither for themselves nor their children.
- (2) Laws against the consumption of alcohol by people under the age of 21 along with consistent information regarding negative health effects, yet alcohol is very prevalent in social settings, community events, and often provided by a parent.

Another area that received high problem response rates from women surveyed is children's education. 26.3 percent of the women responding to the WYSAC survey for WCWI said that they had problems with their children's education. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2005, over 91 percent of the people in Wyoming 25 years and over had an educational attainment of at least a high school diploma or equivalency—compared to 84.2 percent nationally. Wyoming's population also does better than the nation as a whole in achieving some college education or obtaining an Associate degree. Wyoming begins to fall behind the nation, however, in the percentage of the population in which Bachelor's and Graduate or professional degrees are obtained. Wyoming has 23.2 percent of the population 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree or higher, whereas the proportion nationally is 27.2

percent (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 2006a). Encouraging teens to pursue higher education, particularly young women, would significantly improve their chances of obtaining living wage or better jobs.

***Problem #3: Employment and Wages***

“Employment and wages” was cited as a personal problem by 29.3 percent of the women surveyed. More than half (51.0 percent) of the women who said they were experiencing problems with employment and wages, indicated their number one issue was low wages. The next most often cited issue, at 18.5 percent, was “not enough opportunities for the kind of work I want”. 8.9 percent of the women experiencing employment and wage problems cited a hostile work environment as their number one issue, making this the third most common issue, however, consider also that 13.1 percent of all the respondents said they had experienced problems with discrimination.

To discover if respondents' concerns with low wages had to do with the amount of earnings as it relates to expenses, i.e., a living wage, a profile of the typical respondent was developed, based on survey responses to questions regarding the number of adults, children, and infants in the respondents' households and the total household income. The typical respondent was married, living in a two-adult household and had no children living at home, with an average yearly income of \$24,012 - \$36,000.

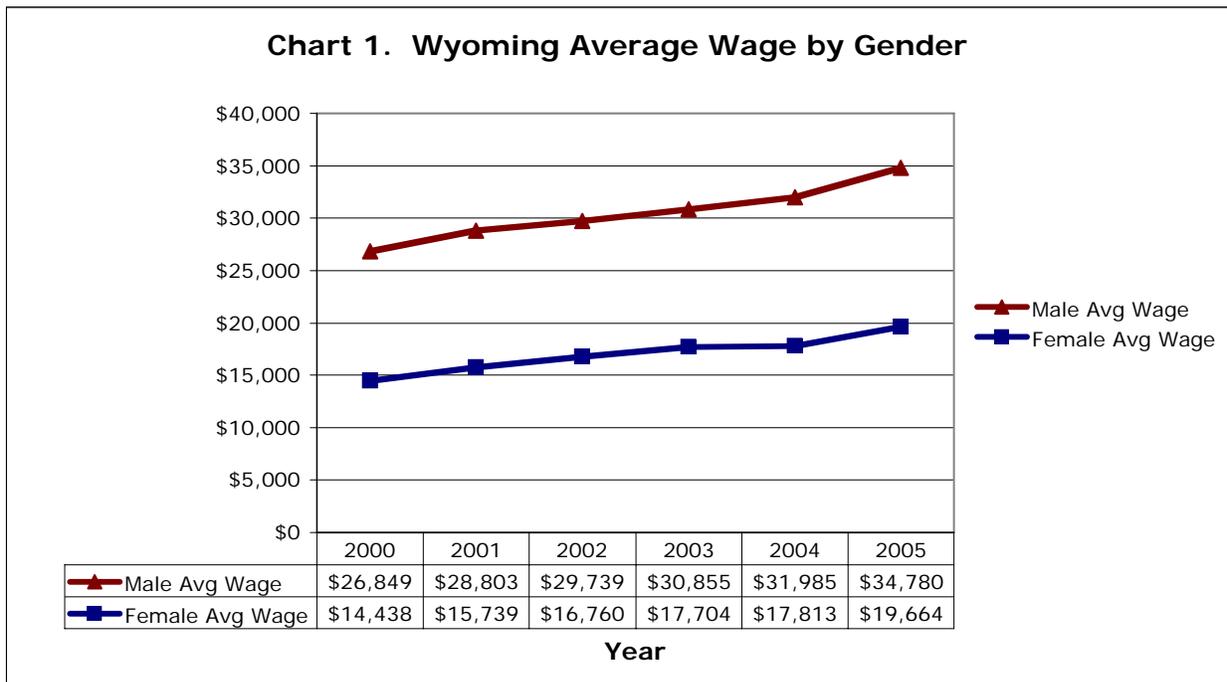
Data from the Wyoming Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard (FESS) for 2004 was totaled for all counties and averaged for a two-adult household. This source indicates that in 2004, an average income of \$21,040 would be sufficient to support the most basic living needs in Wyoming. The FESS accounts for the costs of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, miscellaneous expenses, and taxes. As a result, women with household incomes in the \$24,012 - \$36,000 range may be able to pay for their most basic needs, but cannot save for retirement, cannot pay for desired training or education in order to obtain better jobs, and cannot pay for expenses related to children in college, for example.

Another factor in this low wage problem may be that women are holding multiple jobs in order to achieve the yearly incomes the survey is reflecting. The wage disparity study, introduced at the beginning of this discussion, found that women in Wyoming had a larger than average need to hold multiple jobs (Alexander 2003).

The large disparity between men's and women's wages in Wyoming is another likely factor in women's high rate of problems with low wages. The wage disparity study, citing a report using data from 1999, showed women's median earnings as a percentage of men's median earnings for full-time workers as 62.6 percent. The IWPR Status Report for Wyoming makes a similar finding that “women earned only 66.3 percent of what men earned in 2002” and that “Wyoming has the worst wage ratio in the country, ranking 51<sup>st</sup> in the nation for the ratio of women's to men's earnings for full-time, year-round work.” (Caiazza 2004) A recent IWPR report shows Wyoming's 2005 ratio of female-male earnings as having declined to 60.7 percent whereas the national ratio is still 77.0 percent (Hartmann 2006). Wyoming's wage gap is getting worse, not better, over time.

Chart 1 shows average wages earned annually by men and women, but includes part-time and seasonal wages as well. The inclusion of part-time and seasonal wages into the average annual wage figures does not appear to skew the overall picture or bias the understandings drawn from these data.

The impact of this wage differential on Wyoming families is significant. Calculated with the median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers, as given by Henderson & Saulcy (2001), women earned \$12,116 less per year than men. Calculated by average annual wage (part-time and full-time), as given by Chart 1, women earned \$12,411 less per year than men in 2000 and earned \$15,116 less than men in 2005.



Source: Wyoming Department of Employment 2006.

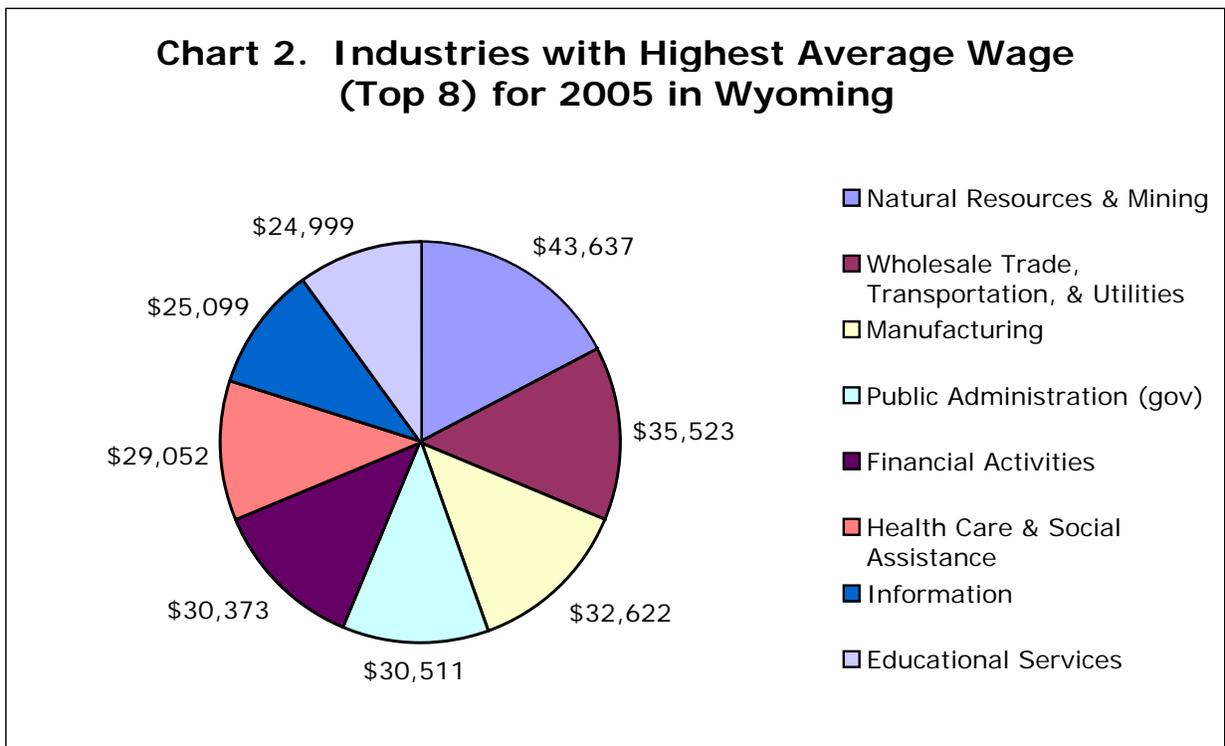
The wage disparity study cites the Council of Economic Advisors (1998) for findings on component explanations of the wage disparity in the U.S. The Council found that skill and experience differences account for about 28 percent of the disparity between men's and women's wages. Occupations and the types of jobs typically held by women and men, time spent at work, differences in education, and industry and firm situations account for another 32 percent of the wage gap and 40 percent of the wage gap is due to "other factors". According to Alexander et. al., these "other factors" most certainly include some amount of illegal gender discrimination, which is estimated at somewhere between 2 and 12 percent or more.

Alexander et. al., conclude in the wage disparity study that:

Moving more women into traditionally "male" jobs, bringing certain female dominated jobs up to the national average wage, and improving the opportunity

for more women to work full-time would have a significant positive effect in reducing the wage disparity.

Reasonable additions to the tactic of moving more women into traditionally male jobs would be to also consider the average wage paid by those jobs (see Chart 2) and whether or not the industry is likely to grow in the future. Wyoming's five highest growth rate industries for June 2005 to June 2006 were: mining (15.3%), heavy & civil engineering construction (11.7%), merchant wholesalers, durable goods (10.6%), repair & maintenance (9.7%) and mining excluding oil & gas (8.9%) (Leonard, p.1). Industries related to energy development and transportation (TCPU) have consistently had large payroll shares in Wyoming's economy. These are not typical industries in which women are currently employed and they are among the top paying industries in Wyoming.



Source: Wyoming Department of Employment 2006.

Construction, on the other hand, as an example, is the second highest occupation for males and has a low proportion of females employed. According to data from the Wyoming Department of Employment, in 2005, construction employment was third in the state in terms of number of people employed and is generally a strong industry in many parts of the state. However, on average, construction wages are not among the highest—10<sup>th</sup> for average male wages in 2005 out of 14 industry classifications. Consideration of this industry's seasonal nature should also be given.

Bringing female wages up to the national average in industries with high proportions of women would reduce one of the most egregious wage gaps seen in the 2005 data from the Wyoming Department of Employment. In 2005, the health care & social assistance industry was the top

employer of women in Wyoming; its male employee ratio was 16.6 percent and it was 10<sup>th</sup> out of 14 industry categories in number of men employed. Yet, men's average wages in this industry were \$56,155 and women's average wages were \$24,678.

A major barrier to women being able to work more, be it moving into a full-time job or spending more time in the jobs they have, is the lack of affordable and quality child care. This issue is discussed in the next section. Women with children are also likely to avoid jobs with inflexible or out-of-the-ordinary work schedules. Provision of more affordable and quality child care would have a positive impact in enabling women to broaden their work choices, as would changes in business practices to incorporate workforce programs that meet employee's needs for child care, flexible schedules, etc.

The disparity between men's and women's wages affects all Wyoming households that have any working women in them. The wage disparity study demonstrates that the magnitude of the negative economic impact on the state's economy is in the millions of dollars. As shown above, the cost to each Wyoming family is along the lines of \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year.

***Problem #4: Child Care***

Child care was a problem cited by 29.2 percent of the women who had children at home. The survey defined "child care" as including day care, preschool, after school care, home care, or babysitting for any of the respondent's children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews or other children for whose care the respondent was responsible. There were two issues that 31.5 percent of the respondents who had child care issues cited as their number one issue. 31.5 percent indicated cost of child care was their number one issue and 31.5 percent indicated that availability of child care was their number one issue. Quality of child care was the third most common issue for 30.6 percent of the women who said they were having child care problems.

The issues of cost, availability and quality are reflected in survey respondent's use of child care providers. 57.8 percent of the respondents who experience child care problems leave their children with other adult family members or friends when they need child care. 19.8 percent of the respondents who had child care problems make use of day care centers, home day cares, or sitter's in someone's home. The remaining respondents' children stayed by themselves, with nonadults, or otherwise did not need child care. Similarly, in response to a survey question regarding how much money the respondent's household spent on child care, 64.7 percent of the responses were "none/does not apply".

Clearly, women are making adjustments to their jobs, such as the types of jobs they obtain and whether or not the jobs are part-time v. full-time, due to cost, availability, and quality concerns with child care. Improvements in the provision of affordable and quality child care would make it possible for more women to move into full-time employment, if they desire. It would also make it possible for women to spend more time at work or obtain higher education, both being cited as major causes of wage disparity (Alexander 2003).

## ***What's Being Done***

This discussion demonstrates the advances that could be made in three out of the four top problems for women living in Wyoming just by decreasing the gap between men's and women's wages. The WCWI recently instituted two programs aimed at lessening the wage gap. A Nontraditional Job Fair for high school girls has been established to encourage women to pursue employment in fields that pay at least a living wage. In Wyoming, this typically means nontraditional jobs in sectors such as mining and energy development. Even though Wyoming's rural nature and mountainous geography often make for long and difficult trips to attend events, the first Nontraditional Job Fair held in October 2006 attracted over 600 female students.

Another WCWI program aimed at reducing the wage gap is the Summit Award. This award program aims to educate businesses about family-friendly and workforce-friendly practices, such as on-site childcare, job sharing, flex schedules, and home-based work options, that lower employee absenteeism and turn-over, and enable employees to be more productive and meet both job and family obligations more efficiently. Programs encouraged via the Summit Award could also enable more women to spend more time and work and take on full-time employment, which are also contributing factors to the wage gap. This award program is two years old. WCWI partners with the Wyoming Business Council, the Wyoming Business Alliance, the Department of Workforce Services, and the Department of Family Services to recognize and advertise the advantages of successful business programs.

The 2006 Wyoming Family Photo describes a variety of efforts that also could help in reducing the wage gap; a selection of these efforts are provided below. Many, however, are not targeted specifically at women. Wyoming's wage gap is getting worse. Concerted effort is needed to communicate the magnitude of this issue and the myriad of problems that stem from it. Conversely, there are significant benefits to families, employers, and the state economy in reducing the wage gap as more workers would be able to join the labor force, employee turn-over would be reduced, and additional income and spending within the state would result.

- The CLIMB Wyoming Program of Our Families Our Future trains and places low-income single mothers in jobs that successfully support their families. Serving over 120 women and 250 children per year, monthly income for employed clients over the age of 23 doubled on average from \$850 per month to \$1,981 per month after completion of the program.
- In 2006, Central Wyoming College partnered with the Department of Workforce Services and BTI, Inc. to offer the only known railcar repair program in the U.S. All students completing the program were offered positions at the BTI Railcar Repair Facility in Shoshoni, increasing their wages by over 40 percent.
- To attract students and meet workforce demands in Wyoming, the seven community colleges launched 21 new degree or certificate programs, including compression technology, construction technology, railcar maintenance and paramedic technology in the 2005-2006 school year.

- The Wyoming Department of Corrections and the Carbon County Higher Education Center are partnering to open a child care center in Rawlins...[that] will provide extended-hours care to 37 children, and pay all employees self-sufficient wages as calculated by the Wyoming Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard.
- The Boys and Girls Club of Carbon County After-school Program offers almost 90 students a day a safe place to go after school. This program provides homework assistance, enrichment activities, recreational opportunities, mentoring and loads of fun.
- The Wyoming Legislature recently expanded funding to train physicians and nurses at the University of Wyoming, and provides loan repayment to those who return to practice in the state.
- Beginning in the fall of 2006, the Hathaway Scholarship Program will provide tuition assistance to Wyoming high school graduates who wish to attend the University of Wyoming or any of the seven community colleges depending on grades, scores on college entrance exams and financial need.

Source: Wyoming Department of Family Services (nd).

The 2006 Wyoming Family Photo also cites 2004-2006 legislative actions (excerpts) that will have positive impacts on the problems women are facing in Wyoming.

- Provided state-funded immunizations for Wyoming children not otherwise eligible for immunizations.
- Dedicated millions of dollars to enhance the quality and availability of statewide mental health and substance abuse services.
- Required a study authorizing the creation of a Quality Child Care program that includes criteria for rating child care facilities, an incentive payment program, scholarships for professional staff development, and education and awareness outreach to parents and the public.
- Approved "ignition interlock" devices on automobiles belonging to individuals convicted of DUI. This enables those convicted with suspended licenses to drive legally while protecting the public from drunk drivers.
- Expanded eligibility for the Child Health Insurance Program (KidCare) to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, and extended coverage to working, low-income parents and guardians on a sliding fee scale.
- Created the merit- and need-based Hathaway Scholarship program, which provides tuition assistance to Wyoming high school graduates depending on grades, cores on college entrance exams and financial need.
- Strengthened penalties and fines for illegal sale of tobacco products to minors.
- Increased funding for and access to treatment for those suffering from methamphetamine and other controlled substance addictions.

- Created the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program in Wyoming for youth at risk, age 16 to 18, who have dropped out of the public school. The program encourages students to attain a high school diploma or high school equivalency certification and develop life skills.

Communicating with teens, as the second priority issue for women in Wyoming, should also receive attention. There are numerous organizations and programs targeted at providing parenting help and at providing help for at-risk teens. A few examples are:

- **“Because I Love You, the Parent Support Group.** ‘Because I Love You’ (BILY) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting parents with troubled children of any age. We promote structure, consequences and consistency in raising our kids and we have helped thousands of families over the past 23 years.” <http://www.becauseiloveyou.org/> There are BILY groups in Gillette and Campbell County, Wyoming.
- **Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP).** The STEP program is composed of three separate classes for parents. Parents with children from birth to age 5, parents with children from 6 through 12, and parents with children in their teens. <http://www.fremontcounty.org/prevention.htm>
- **Children Are People Support Group (CAP) and Teens Are People Support Group (TAP).** These programs allow young people to communicate with other young people their age about feelings, defenses, chemical dependency, decision making skills, families and self esteem. <http://www.fremontcounty.org/prevention.htm>
- **Focus Adolescent Services website for Family Help in Wyoming.** Numerous listings for hotlines and helplines, links to information on health insurance, grandparents raising grandchildren, child support, drugs, legal statutes regarding children, etc., links to organizations such as Parent Education Network, Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Wyoming Children’s Action Alliance, etc., book references, links to schools, programs and services, such as Connect Wyoming, Boarding Schools and Programs for Troubled Teens, Outdoor Programs and Summer Camps, etc., and support links to organizations such as HEARTBEAT (Survivors of Suicide Grief Support), Parents Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in Wyoming, Families Anonymous, etc. <http://www.focusas.com/Wyoming.html>

The fact that women continue to experience problems with communicating with teens indicates that either information about the helpful programs that exist is not getting adequately disseminated or the existing programs are not meeting the need. One likely factor, again, is the rural nature of Wyoming. A program in one part of the state serves only the relatively small population in that area—Wyoming has a population density of 5.1 people per square mile.

The challenge may be finding successful programs in one part of the state and seeking funding to sustainably develop similar programs in other parts of the state. There are several philanthropic organizations that seek to provide seed money for such efforts. One possible source is the Wyoming Women’s Foundation, an endowed fund of the Wyoming Community Foundation.

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