



78% of Those Who Hold the 20 Most Lucrative College Degrees are Men

Those holding degrees in the most female-dominated majors earn significantly less

NEW YORK - September 5, 2023 - Nearly 4 in 5 (78%) of those who hold the top 20 most lucrative bachelor's degrees are men, while only 22% are women, according to a new Bankrate study. The study analyzed 151 majors based on data pertaining to median income earned by degree holders, as well as the percentage of men vs. women for all bachelor's degree holders. Click the below link for more information:

<https://www.bankrate.com/loans/student-loans/top-paying-college-majors-gender-gap/>

Overall, STEM majors - those focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics - dominated the top 20 most lucrative degrees, in terms of median income. Further, the majority of degree holders within the top 20 are heavily skewed towards men.

Of the top 20 highest-earning majors, the only ones not heavily dominated by men are Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Administration, and Health and Medical Preparatory Programs. In this case, around half (56% and 46%, respectively) of degree holders are women, leaving 44% and 54% of men, respectively. Other than those two majors, women do not represent more than 33% of degree holders of any of the other top 20 majors.

Rank	College Majors	Percent of Male Degree Holders	Percent of Female Degree Holders	Median Salary
1	Electrical Engineering	85%	15%	\$110,000
2	Computer Engineering	81%	19%	\$104,000
3	Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Administration	44%	56%	\$100,000
4	Chemical Engineering	70%	30%	\$100,000
5	Computer Science	78%	22%	\$100,000

6	Aerospace Engineering	89%	11%	\$100,000
7	Materials Engineering and Materials Science	77%	23%	\$98,500
8	Engineering Mechanics, Physics, and Science	84%	16%	\$95,000
9	Mechanical Engineering	89%	11%	\$95,000
10	Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering	72%	28%	\$90,000
11	Physics	81%	19%	\$90,000
12	Electrical Engineering Technology	84%	16%	\$90,000
13	Petroleum Engineering	85%	15%	\$90,000
14	General Engineering	85%	15%	\$90,000
15	Management Information Systems and Statistics	68%	32%	\$89,000
16	Civil Engineering	81%	19%	\$89,000
17	Health and Medical Preparatory Programs	54%	46%	\$87,000
18	Applied Mathematics	67%	33%	\$85,000
19	Economics	69%	31%	\$85,000
20	Transportation Sciences and Technologies	89%	11%	\$85,000

“Despite making progress in recent decades, men continue to disproportionately dominate college majors that lead to the highest salaries in the workforce,” says Bankrate Analyst Alex Gailey. “The fact that the male-female gender gap in lucrative college majors remains so vast after decades of women outnumbering men on college campuses suggests that women are still playing catch-up.”

On the other hand, those majoring in the most female-dominated majors on the list earn significantly less than the male-dominated ones. The top 5 majors with the highest percentage of female degree holders include Early Childhood Education (96% female; median salary: \$43,000), Communication Disorders Sciences and Services (93%; median salary: \$57,000), Family and Consumer Services (90%; median salary: \$45,000), Elementary Education (90%; median salary: \$48,400), and Nursing (89%; median salary \$70,000).

Out of the five female-dominated majors mentioned, only those with a Nursing degree earn a median salary that is higher than \$60,000 (\$70,000 annually). The lowest earning major on the list is Early Childhood Education at \$43,000 annually, which is also the most heavily female-skewed.

“Women continue to be overrepresented in college degrees that result in lower wages compared to men,” adds Gailey. “But even when women do study male-dominated majors and earn similar qualifications, they are still paid less than their male counterparts once they enter the workforce. It suggests work done by women isn’t valued as much in our economy.”

These lower wages may be contributing to feelings of financial insecurity for many women. Bankrate’s July 2023 Financial Freedom Survey revealed that 64% of women with college degrees do not feel financially secure, compared to a mere 36% who do. More than 1 in 5 women with college degrees (21%) do not believe they ever will achieve financial security. Women with college degrees are significantly more likely to feel this way compared to their male counterparts: the same survey found that 43% of men with college degrees feel completely financially secure, and only 16% don’t believe they ever will be financially secure (<https://www.bankrate.com/personal-finance/financial-freedom-survey/>).

“Gender segregation in high-paying college majors, which translates to pay gaps between men and women in the labor market, is a systemic issue,” says Gailey. “But there are ways women can empower themselves to achieve their financial goals. Practice pay transparency with your colleagues, do as much research as possible on salaries for workers with your educational level and experience, get comfortable with negotiating and create a solid financial plan.”

Methodology:

Bankrate looked at the most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, based on interviews of more than 2 million Americans. Bankrate extracted the 2021 data from IPUMS USA, the clearinghouse of census data hosted by the University of Minnesota. Bankrate analyzed bachelor’s degree holders between the ages of 18 and 77 who were in the labor force and either employed or seeking work. We looked at the 151 majors reported by at least 250 people in the 2021 ACS. To construct our analysis, Bankrate examined two factors: median income and percent of men vs. women who hold degrees in that field.

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