

Women in the workplace

Week 4: Top occupations filled by women

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Women still fill traditional occupations

Today, women receive 52 percent of all high school diplomas granted in the U.S., 62 percent of associate's degrees, 57 percent of bachelor's degrees and 50 percent of doctoral and professional degrees.

In 2008, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 38 percent of the lawyers, 32 percent of the doctors and 40 percent of all managers in the U.S. were women.

Certainly, the landscape has changed. For example, the American Medical Association reports that in 1970 there were 25,401 female physicians in the U.S. or 7.6 percent of all physicians. By 2006, the number of female physicians increased to 256,257 or almost one-third of all doctors.

However, women are still much more likely to work in occupations traditionally held by women. Today, the top occupations held by women are teacher (K-12), health care support, registered nurse, and secretary or administrative assistant. All remain dominated by women. Almost three-quarters of all K-12 teachers (73.3 percent) are women. The vast majority of secretaries and administrative assistants (96.5 percent) and registered nurses (90.1 percent) are women.

The following chart provides occupational data for women in the U.S. Similar data for all occupations is available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics at: <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aat39.txt>

Top occupations held by women, 2008

	Percentage of all women workers	Percentage of all workers who are women
Teachers (K-12)	5.8%	73.3%
Secretaries and administrative assistants	5.3%	96.5%
Health care support occupations*	4.1%	84.8%
Registered nurses	4.0%	90.1%
First-line supervisors / managers of retail sales workers	2.2%	42.5%
First-line supervisors / managers of office and administrative support	2.2%	45.9%
Cashiers	2.2%	74.0%
Customer service representatives	2.2%	67.2%
Accountants and auditors	1.9%	60.5%

* Healthcare support occupations include: nurses aides home health aides, dental assistants, and other healthcare aides and assistants.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008