

Florida's Workers by the Number

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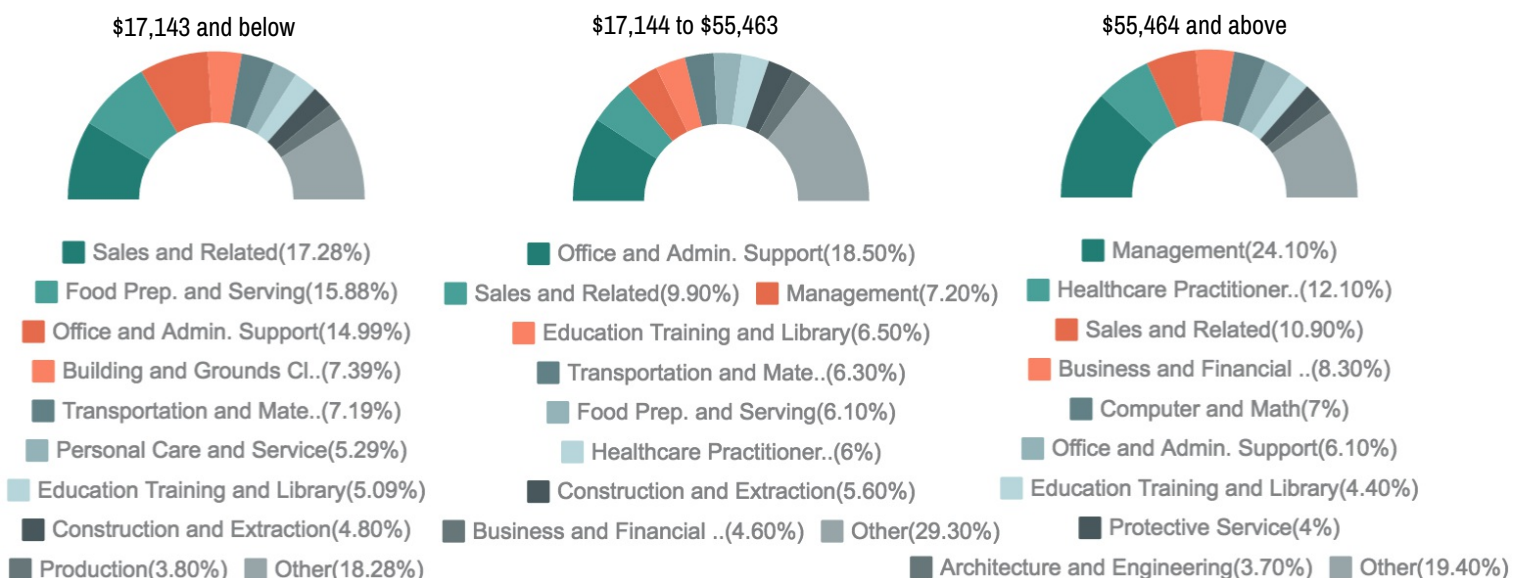
According to the most recently available government data, 65 percent of Florida workers earn annual salaries below the state average annual salary of \$39,099. The position of a worker along the distribution of earnings in Florida is largely dependent on their occupation and is heavily influenced by their sex, race and ethnicity. This brief will present Florida's occupational structure by annual earnings and the demographics associated with low, middle, and high earning jobs.

The data show that most workers with low earnings, annual earnings of \$17,143 and below, are concentrated in occupations such as sales and related jobs, food preparation and service jobs, and office and administrative support occupations (see figure 1).¹ Some of these jobs have large shares of workers earning less than \$10 per hour. For example, 53.6 percent of workers in food preparation and service jobs earn wages below \$10 per hour, as do 36.7 percent of jobs in building and grounds cleaning and maintenance and 34.9 percent of jobs in personal care and service.

When a disproportionately large share of jobs in an occupation are low paying workers are generally forced to change occupations to pursue upward economic mobility.

Unlike the working class, middle class workers have a broad range of employment options with middle earnings means. However, it is important to note that middle earnings occupations represent a many occupations because they span a wide range of earnings, between \$17,144 and \$55,463 a year.

Figure 1: Main Occupations by Earnings Group in Florida: 2014



Sources : U.S. Census American Community Survey 1-year estimates

Workers in middle earning jobs are less concentrated although office and administrative support occupations and sales and related jobs are the largest middle earning occupations, comprising 18.5 percent and 9.9 percent of middle earnings jobs respectively.

Workers in high earnings jobs are largely concentrated in management jobs, healthcare practitioner and technical occupations, and sales and related jobs. In fact, management jobs represent 24.1 percent of all upper class jobs, nearly a quarter. Upper earnings jobs represent the two deciles with the highest earnings in Florida, the top 20 percent of salary earners with annual earnings of \$55,463 and above.

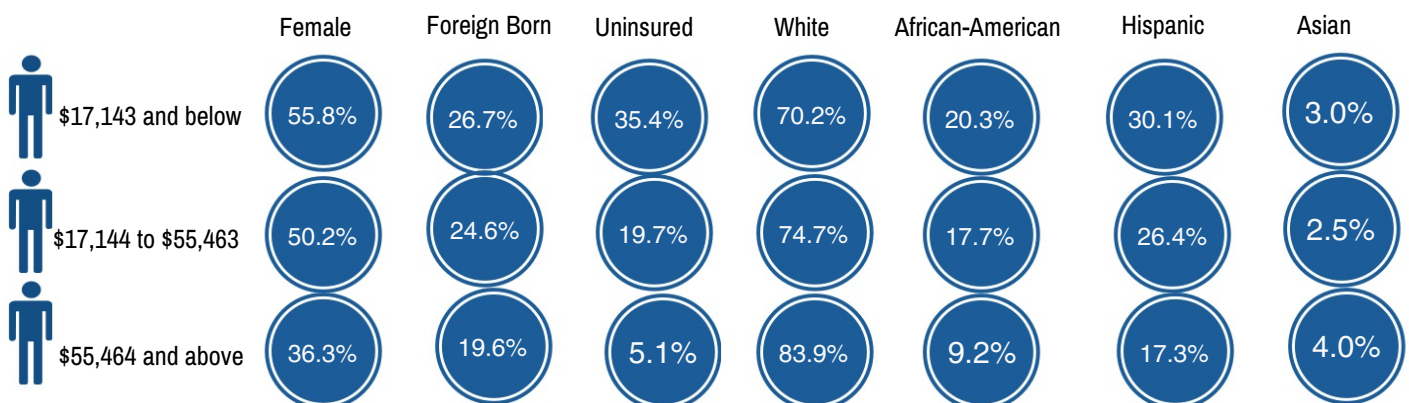
Occupational trends are important because they largely shape the economic classes that workers belong to and impact the opportunities for economic mobility that workers are afforded. For example, the preponderance of sales and related jobs and office and administrative support occupations among all earnings group suggests that these jobs potentially facilitate upward mobility. Conversely, the high share of workers with low earnings in occupations that have large shares of workers earning hourly wages below \$10 per hour provides evidence that many workers in Florida have limited

opportunities for economic mobility in their existing professions.

The data show that demographic trends underlie the distribution of earnings in Florida. The average annual salary in Florida is \$39,099 while the median annual salary is \$28,236. This means that while half of the working population earns annual salaries below \$28,236 the average is considerably higher than the median because of the presence of some high salary earners. Florida's women and racial and ethnic minorities comprise the majority of workers below the state average because they are largely concentrated towards low and middle earnings while white males are more representative of the upper earnings group.

In 2014, 56 percent of low earnings workers were women, compared to 50 percent of middle earnings workers and 36.7 percent of high earnings workers (see figure 2). Additionally, 70.4 percent of women earn annual salaries below the state average, compared to 59.8 percent of men. Disparities in the earnings of men and women lead to men to out-earn women by an average of \$12,737 annually (the average annual salary is \$45,374 compared to \$32,637 for women). Furthermore, women earn \$0.78 for every \$1 made by men, after controlling for age, education, and occupation.

Figure 2: Demographic Shares by Earnings Group in Florida: 2014



Sources : U.S. Census American Community Survey 1-year estimates

The same dynamic exists for African-Americans and Hispanics. African-American workers represented 20.4 percent of low earnings workers, 17.7 percent of middle earnings workers, and 9.3 percent of high earning workers. Hispanic workers represented 27 percent of low earnings workers, 24.6 percent of middle earnings workers, and 19.6 percent of high earning workers. Conversely, white workers represented 70.3 percent of low earnings workers, 74.8 percent of middle earnings workers, and 83.4 percent of high earning workers.²

As a result, 41.7 percent of white workers make less than the state average compared to 74.7 percent of racial minorities. On average, non-Hispanic whites earn annual salaries of \$45,267 compared to \$31,205 for racial and ethnic minorities, and \$32,160 for Hispanics. Non-Hispanic white males in particular have an average annual salary of \$53,716.

Data suggest that the economy is not working for everyone as economic opportunity is limited for some in low-wage occupations and evades those that have been traditionally subject to economic marginalization. There is much that government, businesses, and civic organizations can do to shift the state in the direction of greater economic inclusion and shared prosperity. We propose that Florida policymakers and businesses can narrow economic polarization and reduce the inequality gap by paying higher wages to low-wage workers; increasing the benefits of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); reducing workplace discrimination through greater enforcement of existing anti-discrimination laws and through greater transparency in pay structures; and improving educational outcomes, especially in college graduation rates.



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Footnotes:

- 1) Florida's labor force was divided into deciles, 10 equally sized groups, by annual earnings. Low earnings jobs include deciles 1 through 3, middle earnings jobs include deciles 4 through 8, and high earnings jobs include deciles 9 and 10.
- 2) White workers include white Hispanic workers.