

The Gender Wage Gap in the Reform Movement: A United Data Narrative

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Introduction

According to the latest statistics on the overall economy in the United States, women are paid less than men across the wage distribution and across all levels of educational attainment. At the median, women are paid 16 percent less than men on an hourly basis. The gap is wider at the top of the wage scale: a woman at the 95th percentile of the wage distribution is paid 18 percent less than a similarly positioned man. The wage gap between women and men with college degrees is 26 percent, and there is a 24 percent gap for those with advanced degrees. Even in a regression framework (controlling for education, age, race, and region) the gender wage gap is 22 percent.¹

The determinants of the gender wage gap in the U.S. economy are multifaceted. On the one hand, the gap is driven by the cumulative impact of many instances over the course of women's lives when they are treated differently than their male peers. Girls can be steered based on gender-normative careers from an early age by parents, teachers, and the overall culture.² On the other hand, female-dominated professions pay less and when women increasingly enter a field, the average pay in that field tends to fall, relative to other fields. On top of that, women with children pay a motherhood penalty in the labor force, lagging behind men and childless women with similar education and experience.³

Setting some of these dynamics aside, within-occupation gender wage gaps are large and persist after controlling for education and

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other factors. Even when men and women work in the same profession—for instance, as hairdressers, nurses, teachers, mechanical engineers, or construction workers—men are paid more, on average, than women.⁴

Many of these socioeconomic factors are at play among employees of the Reform Movement. In an examination of four major professions—rabbis, cantors, educators, and administrators—stark differences in occupations, positions, and pay are apparent. For example, women are more likely to be educators, men are more likely to hold higher-level rabbinic positions, and gender pay gaps persist even among similarly situated professionals. That said, conclusive evidence across all occupations is limited given data inconsistencies and incompleteness.⁵ With larger and randomized sampling, along with benchmarking survey data to data collected for administrative purposes such as running the pension system, wider or narrower gaps may be found. Detailed information on nonwage forms of compensation such as paid leave benefits or pensions may reveal further disparities in pay or trade-offs between wages and such valuable benefits. Regardless, the differences found here are sizeable and cannot be easily explained away. Fortunately, the social justice imperative within the Reform Movement can be called upon to work to minimize differences in opportunity and pay. Wage transparency is an important first step and making it a priority is key to moving toward equality. While there is no silver bullet, information and a will to act can lead to vast improvements in gender parity.

The main findings of this study on the Reform Movement are as follows:

- Women and men serve in different positions within the Reform Movement.
 - Women are far more likely to be educators than men.
 - Congregational women rabbis are less likely to hold higher-ranking positions than men.
- Within the same positions, women are paid significantly less than men.
 - On average, administrators who are women face a 19 percent pay penalty compared to men.
 - Depending on job title and congregation size, women rabbis are paid 4 percent to 13 percent less than men within each

- group; accounting for the lower probability that women will work as senior or solo rabbis or in larger congregations, women face a 19 percent wage penalty.
- The average pay penalty among full-time cantors is 14 percent, but in the largest congregations the pay gap grows to 29 percent.
 - Data are still rather limited to make a full assessment
 - Administrative data (as provided by the Reform Pension Board in partnership with the CCAR) is the gold standard as reporting can be universal and data is less susceptible to misreporting errors.
 - Consideration should be given to expanding data collection to encompass other factors affecting pay, as with the American Conference of Cantors survey data, to include more comprehensive questions such as position, tenure, experience, region, congregation size, location, work hours, as well as nonwage benefits. Sensitivity to the quality and quantity of responses to these supplemental data questions would improve the ability to evaluate these additional data.
 - Random sampling of survey data where administrative data is not attainable must be sufficiently large to make statistically sound comparisons across occupations, within occupations, and by other individual and job characteristics; in lieu of administrative data, survey respondents may need to be incentivized not only to participate but also to report accurately.
 - Solutions are within reach if they are made a priority.
 - More data is necessary to better assess the points where decisions can be improved and changes made to advance equality.
 - Congregants, armed with the data, may be inspired to make the changes necessary to serve their social justice mandate.

Gender-Based Occupational Segregation

The starkest example of occupational segregation within the four main occupations of the Reform Movement studied in this report is the educators. Educators are found in two different main job categories: the early childhood educators, affiliated with the Early Childhood Educators of Reform Judaism (ECE-RJ), and those educators

associated with the Association of Reform Jewish Educators (ARJE). Both report disproportionately high levels of women. According to reports by representatives of these Reform Movement affiliates, 99 percent of early childhood educators affiliated with the ECE-RJ and 92 percent of educators in the ARJE are women.⁶ Furthermore, only women responded to ARJE's recent salary survey, which makes any gender-based assessments impossible.

Similar to the overall distribution of women in occupations in the American economy, women are disproportionately found in the Reform Movement's teaching professions, including early childhood educators, supplementary school educators, and primary and secondary school teachers. Unfortunately, survey data on these Reform Movement educators were limited to women, so direct differences in wages are not examined here. However, the extent to which women are concentrated in these teaching professions may indicate larger issues with such gender-normative roles and their associated wage penalties.

Study data from the CCAR examines both men and women in the profession as full-time congregational rabbis.⁷ Particularly useful in their study is the differentiation between rabbis in terms of both position title (senior/solo, associate, and assistant) as well as congregational size (in multiple groupings). In terms of the positions men and women hold within congregations, it is clear from the data that men are disproportionately more likely to be senior or solo rabbis than women and women are disproportionately more likely to be associate or assistant rabbis than men. These results are displayed in Figure 1.

Of the 613 rabbis represented in the CCAR salary study, 416—or 68 percent—are men. While it may be a worthwhile goal to achieve gender parity in the profession as a whole, proportionate representation in each of the job categories would show a similar percentage of men represented in each category in the proportion that they are in general. What is shown in Figure 1 is that men are 75 percent of senior or solo rabbis, the most lucrative congregational rabbinic position, but are relatively smaller shares of associate and assistant rabbi positions. Conversely, women are more likely to be associate rabbis and disproportionately more likely to be assistant rabbis than men.

This relationship holds within the senior or solo rabbi position as well (shown in the last three bars of Figure 1). While men make

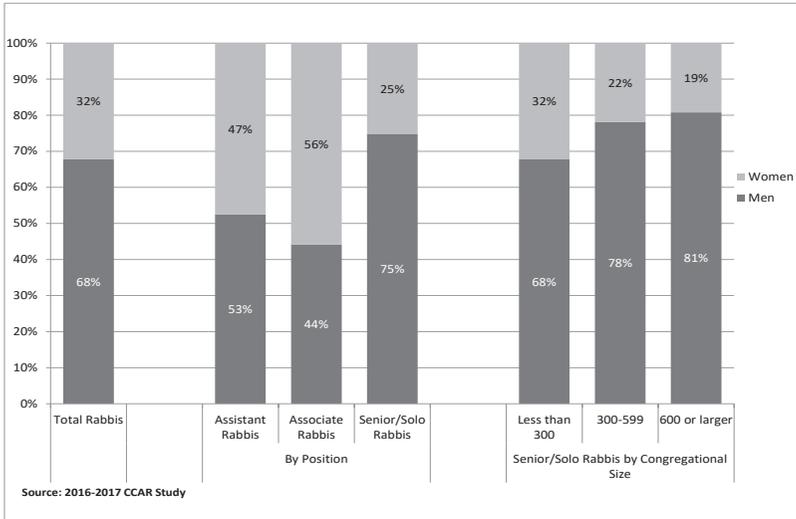


Figure 1. Share of Congregational Rabbis by Job Title and Congregational Size for Men and Women

up 75 percent of senior/solo rabbis, they make up 81 percent of rabbis in larger congregations, with a congregational size greater than 600. Likewise, women are 25 percent of senior/solo rabbis, but comprise 32 percent of rabbis in congregations less than 300 in size. These relative positions matter for pay as senior or solo rabbis are paid more on average and rabbis of larger congregations are paid more on average than rabbis of smaller congregations.

Among cantors studied in the American Conference of Cantors (ACC) 2016 Salary Survey, men and women are relatively more equally represented across positions.⁸ Among the 157 full-time cantors surveyed with information on their gender, 58 percent are women, and 57 percent of those defined as senior or solo cantors are women. Therefore, women are relatively proportionately represented by that job title. Similarly, the shares of full-time men and women serving in congregations small and large are also relatively proportional. If anything, full-time women are disproportionately more likely to be found in larger congregations than men, but that difference is quite small.

Unlike the CCAR data, which focuses on only the full-time rabbis with pension contributions, the ACC salary survey also provides data on part-time cantors.⁹ Women represent 79 percent of the 43 respondents who provided their gender. However, they

represent 84 percent of senior or solo cantor positions among limited-service cantors.

Data from the National Association for Temple Administration (NATA) shows that 67 percent of those surveyed are women.¹⁰ However, no data has been made available by gender for any other job feature to enable the relative proportion of women by membership size, operating budget, or size of staff, all factors that are highly correlated with pay.

As with any findings throughout this paper, it is important to keep in mind that the data provided are rather limited in terms of sample sizes and statistical validity; however, the data are highly suggestive of certain findings. On the whole, it appears that, depending on specific profession, women are more likely to be found in certain occupations or positions than others. Specifically, it is clear that women are more likely to be educators than men. They are also less likely to hold higher-level rabbinic positions in Reform congregations than men.

Within Similar Positions, Women Are Consistently Paid Less Than Men

As mentioned previously, the ARJE data sample does not allow wage comparisons by gender because the entirety of their sample is women. While this is not surprising, considering their occupation is 92 percent women, it is rather limiting in conducting any analysis of the gender wage gap. The NATA data on administrators allows only a cursory comparison of wages by gender within the occupation, while both the CCAR and the ACC allow more apples-to-apples comparisons in their respective occupations.

Starting with the administrators, the NATA 2015 study finds that women, on average, are paid about 19 percent less than men, for an annual salary of \$93,292 among women versus \$115,540 for men.¹¹ This gap is consistent with findings in the U.S. economy as a whole. Recall that the national gender wage gap at the top of the wage distribution—similar to the relative position of sampled administrators—was 18 percent.¹² Within the NATA study, the gap is fairly consistent across the wage distribution, whether measured as an average, at the 25th percentile, or at the 75th percentile of wages. Unfortunately, without data comparisons within the profession, additional analyses are impossible. For more on

this, see the following section, “Further Data Is Necessary for a Full Assessment.”

The CCAR 2016–2017 data on congregational rabbis allows both comparisons by congregational position as well as congregational size.¹³ It is clear from the data that both position and congregational size are important factors in determining rabbinic salaries. As with the discussion of women and men in the various positions and congregational sizes, the CCAR data provides wage information in categorical bands for each position. Among senior or solo rabbis, congregations are grouped into categories A (up to 300), B (301–599), C (600–999), and D (1,000+). Because of smaller sample sizes in the D category, C and D are collapsed in this analysis. Across all three remaining categories of senior or solo rabbis, men on average are paid more than women. Among the smaller congregations up to 300, the gap is 13 percent (\$115,742 versus \$101,044), 9 percent in congregations 301–599 (\$169,494 versus \$154,407), and 8 percent among congregations 600 and larger (\$255,895 versus \$236,049).

Smaller sample sizes among associate and assistant rabbis make a complete analysis more difficult; however, among the data categories where men and women have sufficient sample sizes for analysis, the results are suggestive of small but meaningful wage gaps. Associate women rabbis are paid 8 percent less on average than their male counterparts (\$152,122 versus \$140,334), and assistant women rabbis are paid 4 percent less than their male counterparts (\$104,165 versus \$99,582).

These direct comparisons, particularly among solo and senior rabbis, miss the fact that men are more likely to occupy positions in larger congregations than women. Therefore, if the average salaries of these solo and senior rabbis are reweighted by the proportionate shares of men and women, the gender wage gap grows to 18 percent. Again, this is consistent with the findings for the overall U.S. economy and for the NATA data discussed previously. Similarly, collapsing all three rabbinic positions across all comparable congregational sizes yields similar results: there is a 19 percent wage penalty in the rabbinic profession overall, including both within position salaries as well as the likelihood of women winding up in higher ranking jobs (\$168,524 versus \$137,274).¹⁴

The ACC 2016 Cantor Survey provides a wealth of information upon which to compare male and female salaries.¹⁵ The data are available cut by tenure, current position, experience, congregational

size, and location. As with the CCAR findings, salaries increase by congregational size. Pay is also higher among those with more tenure or years of experience. On average full-time female cantors are paid 14 percent less than male cantors (\$129,289 versus \$149,504). While most positions are not directly comparable because of small sample sizes, women who serve as senior or solo cantors full-time face a 14 percent pay penalty, on average, compared to their male counterparts.

Figure 2 breaks out some of the key indicators of pay among full-time cantors. Pay increases with years of service at their congregation, but at every amount of tenure, women cantors are consistently paid less than their similarly tenured male counterparts. Depending on years of service, the pay penalty ranges from 10 percent to 16 percent. Pay increases with congregational size as does the pay gap. The gender pay gap is almost imperceptible in congregations 251 to 500 in size but grows in larger congregations. The pay gap is 14 percent in congregations of 501 to 1,000 and 29 percent in congregations larger than 1,000.

The ACC study also shows that the gender pay gap is larger in urban settings (21 percent) than in suburban setting (11 percent). Meanwhile, female cantors in growing or declining congregations are paid more than men, on average, while women in stable congregations face a 14 percent pay penalty.¹⁶

Cantors who work in limited-service positions—less than full time—have lower pay than full-time cantors. Among all part-time cantors, women are paid more than men (\$49,973 versus \$37,907).¹⁷ The data are rather thin on this population as the total sample size is only 53 respondents. However, if the data here hold in larger sample sizes, it suggests that among part-time senior and solo cantors, women are paid 6 percent less.

The ACC data also allow some analysis of total compensation. According to the 144 respondents to the compensation questions, full-time women's compensation penalty is 18 percent (\$195,846 versus \$160,028). This suggests that nonwage benefits are not compensating for lower pay in the form of wages.

Further Data Is Necessary for a Full Assessment

While the data available from the four major professions in the Reform Movement provide clear evidence that serious occupational

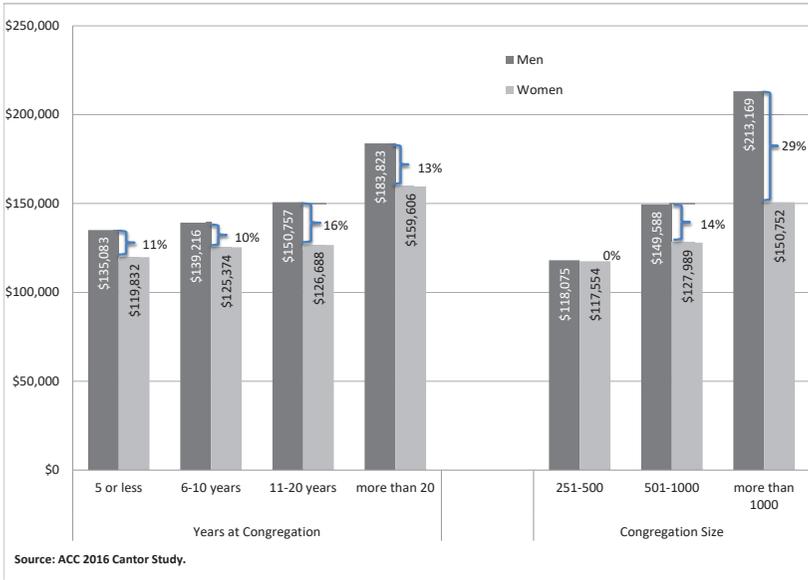


Figure 2. Cantor Pay for Select Categories, by Gender

and pay disparities exist, more data are necessary to better uncover differences and to more accurately and with statistical validity assess the magnitude of the differences. In terms of sampling, it appears that the CCAR study is the gold standard at least when it comes to congregational rabbis because they use what can be considered administrative data based on their pension system. They provide the “universe” of pension-participating rabbis and are more likely to have accurate reporting of their salaries. Unfortunately, not all rabbis are congregational or full time or are actively contributing to the Reform Pension Plan during the surveyed year, and the data does not include other forms of compensation.

The ACC salary survey is the most complete in some ways, providing comprehensive questions that allow comparison by gender on a number of factors such as current position, tenure, experience, region, congregational size, urban/suburban/rural, and full-time/part-time status—all useful explanatory variables when it comes to pay setting and potential discrimination. The sampling scheme, however, may not be random and relies on self-reported data and therefore may not accurately measure the extent of the gender wage gap. Use of their pension fund may provide a limited, but more accurate assessment of some of the differences, as the CCAR does. A

larger sample size in general will allow better and more statistically valid assessments across all of the featured characteristics.

In terms of data on temple administrators and executive directors from NATA, the latest survey is rather limited in the comparisons that can be made because the data by gender are only provided at the most general level without any additional explanatory factors that influence pay. A larger sample, with the ability to compare salaries by gender and congregational size, tenure, years of experience, and even education would make it a more useful tool for assessment.

Last, the ARJE data collected only include women educators—or, in the case of the ECE-RJ, the profession itself is 99 percent women—making it literally impossible to make salary comparisons by gender. A concerted effort needs to be made to collect data on men in the profession or identify a comparable group to compare their salaries, perhaps related to years of experience or educational attainment.

Overall, incentives for larger sample sizes for more accurate and complete reporting is warranted across the board. The more data available, the more accurate analysis can be conducted, controlling for factors such as regional differences in the cost of living or differences in overall compensation packages as well as part-time and full-time status. With larger sample sizes, it would also be possible to conduct regression analysis, measuring the extent to which different individual and job characteristics relate to initial pay as well as pay trajectory throughout their careers.¹⁸

Solutions Are Within Reach

Fortunately, the social justice imperative within the Reform Movement can be called upon to minimize differences in opportunity and pay. It is clear that more data is necessary to better assess the points where decisions can be improved and changes made to advance equality. In that sense, wage transparency is an important first step, but making it a priority is key to moving toward equality. While there is no silver bullet, information and a will to act can lead to vast improvements in gender parity.

In this initial analysis of the limited wage data, it is clear that gaps exist in both the jobs that women are more likely to occupy and the pay they receive at the jobs they have. Taken together, both

lead to lower wages for women as compared to men. Both need to be tackled in the larger world to solve the disparities. For example, the pay gaps within comparable rabbinic positions are relatively narrow; however, they are far wider when the lower likelihood of women reaching higher paying positions is factored in. Therefore, solutions need to not only encompass pay comparability within positions, but also need to expand opportunities to reach higher paying positions. This requires a look at hiring and promotion practices as well as recruitment and mentoring.

Solutions should also include looking to other forms of compensation in addition to wages. Paid parental leave parity, for instance, is important to change the culture of work. When having a child, mothers are thought to be less committed to their job while fathers are not.¹⁹ This translates directly into reduced opportunities and pay for women. But, when paid parental leave is provided *and* men are encouraged to take leave, it can help to equalize expectations. This is just one example that impacts not only the positions women occupy but also the pay penalties they experience.

Each of these components must be addressed in turn to reduce disparities across the board within the Reform Movement. Congregants, armed with the data, may be inspired to make the changes necessary to serve their social justice mandate.

Notes

1. Elise Gould, "The State of American Wages 2017: Wages Have Finally Recovered from the Blow of the Great Recession, but Are Still Growing Too Slowly and Unequally," Economic Policy Institute Report (2018), <https://www.epi.org/publication/the-state-of-american-wages-2017-wages-have-finally-recovered-from-the-blow-of-the-great-recession-but-are-still-growing-too-slowly-and-unequally/>.
2. Jessica Schieder and Elise Gould, "'Women's Work' and the Gender Pay Gap: How Discrimination, Societal Norms, and Other Forces Affect Women's Occupational Choices—and Their Pay." Economic Policy Institute Report (2016), <https://www.epi.org/publication/womens-work-and-the-gender-pay-gap-how-discrimination-societal-norms-and-other-forces-affect-womens-occupational-choices-and-their-pay/>.
3. Elise Gould, Jessica Schieder, and Kathleen Geier, "What Is the Gender Pay Gap and Is It Real? The Complete Guide to How Women Are Paid Less Than Men and Why it Can't Be Explained

- Away,” Economic Policy Institute Report (2016), <https://www.epi.org/publication/what-is-the-gender-pay-gap-and-is-it-real/>.
4. Schieder and Gould, “‘Women’s Work’ and the Gender Pay Gap.”
 5. The clear exception is the CCAR, which has more comprehensive as well as administratively benchmarked data for full-time congregational rabbis who participate in the pension system.
 6. Reported by organizational liaisons during discussion at October 9, 2017, meeting of the Reform Pay Equity Initiative in New York City.
 7. “2016–2017 Study of Rabbinic Compensation: A Partnership Project of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and Union for Reform Judaism” (June 2017), http://www.ccarnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2016-2017_salary_study_.pdf.
 8. “American Conference of Cantors 2016 Salary Survey” (November 2016).
 9. Question 1 of the ACC 2016–2017 salary survey asks, “Which of the following best describes your pulpit position?” The choices are “I am full time” and then within the response “I am part time,” there are three options for limited-service positions based on hours worked per week: 10 hours or less, between 10 and 20 hours, or between 20 and 40 hours. All part-time cantors are grouped together, regardless of hours, and may also be referred to as limited-service cantors.
 10. “National Association for Temple Administration Compensation and Benefits Survey Executive Summary,” prepared by Association Research, Inc. (September 2015).
 11. Ibid.
 12. Gould, “The State of American Wages 2017.”
 13. “2016–2017 Study of Rabbinic Compensation.”
 14. This aggregation omits categories with very small sample sizes as salary information was not provided in the summary tables.
 15. “American Conference of Cantors 2016 Salary Survey.”
 16. These categories are provided by question 21 of the ACC 2016–2017 salary survey: “Over the last five years, describe the membership of your congregation.” Possible responses are: Growing, Declining, Stable, or N/A.
 17. Because all cantors in this group are part time, it is impossible to know whether these differences can be attributed to differential hours between men and women.
 18. Regression analysis is a statistical method used for the investigation of relationships between variables holding constant certain factors.
 19. Gould, Schieder, and Geier *What Is the Gender Pay Gap and Is It Real?* (2016).