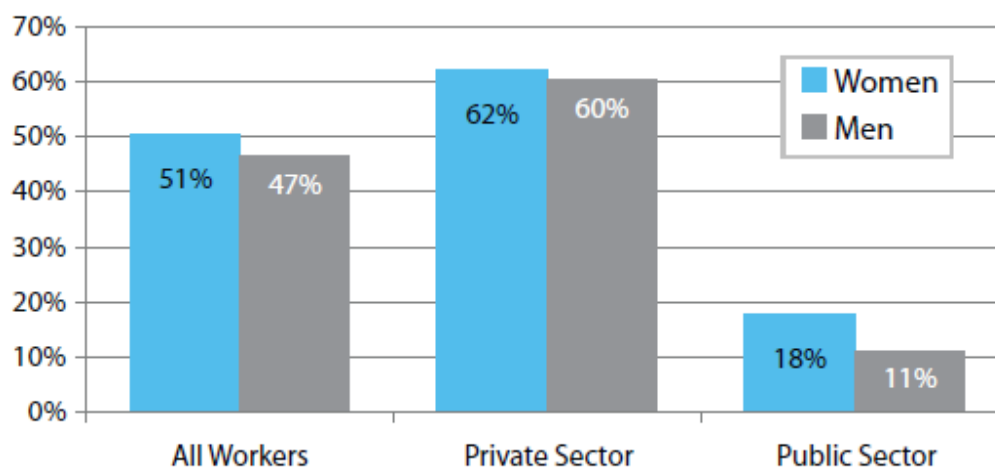


Pay Secrecy and Wage Discrimination

The IWPR/Rockefeller survey is the first to ask workers whether there are policies at their work places that discourage or prohibit sharing information about pay. Respondents with jobs were asked to indicate which of the following statement best characterized their work place: a) wage and salary information is public; b) wage and salary information can be discussed in the workplace; c) discussion of wage and salary information is discouraged by managers; d) discussion is formally prohibited, and/or employees caught discussing wage and salary information could be punished.

About half of all workers (51 percent of women and 47 percent of men) report that the discussion of wage and salary information is either discouraged or prohibited and/or could lead to punishment. Most government agencies have formal grade and step systems that make general wage and salary information public (only 18 percent of women and 11 percent of men in the public sector report discouragement or prohibition of wage and salary discussions). According to the survey respondents, private sector employers are more likely to try to control access to this information: 62 percent of women and 60 percent of men working for private employers report that wage and salary information is secret. Pay secrecy is even more common among single mothers: nearly two of three (63 percent) say they work for employers who discourage or prohibit discussion of wage and salary information. While there may be no direct link between pay secrecy and pay inequality, pay secrecy appears to contribute to the gender gap in earnings.

Figure 1. Pay Secrecy Policies by Type of Employer (All Workers)



Notes: Percent responding "discussion of wage information is discouraged or prohibited."

N=1,076

Source: IWPR/Rockefeller Survey of Economic Security 2010.

Table 1. Pay Secrecy Policies in the Workplace

	Wage discussion discouraged or prohibited	
	Women	Men
All Workers	51%	47%
Race & Ethnicity		
White	52%	48%
Black	41%	48%
Hispanic	50%	43%
Respondent's Age		
18-44 Years	48%	50%
45-59 Years	52%	48%
60+ Years	53%	35%
Educational Attainment		
High School Diploma or Less	51%	41%
Some College or Associate's Degree	56%	52%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	44%	46%
Family Type		
Single, No Children	57%	50%
Married, No Children	51%	42%
Single Parent	63%	na
Married Parent	37%	47%
Current Work Status		
Employed Part-Time	47%	48%
Employed Full-Time	54%	46%
Employment Type		
Private Sector	62%	60%
Public Sector	18%	11%

Note: N=1,076

Source: IWPR/Rockefeller Survey of Economic Security 2010.

Figure 1 and Table 1 excerpted from Jeff Hayes and Heidi Hartmann, *Women and Men Living on the Edge: Economic Insecurity after the Great Recession*, Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2011 (IWPR # C386).

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