

# *Women's Earnings in the Ocean State*

## *1998-2010*

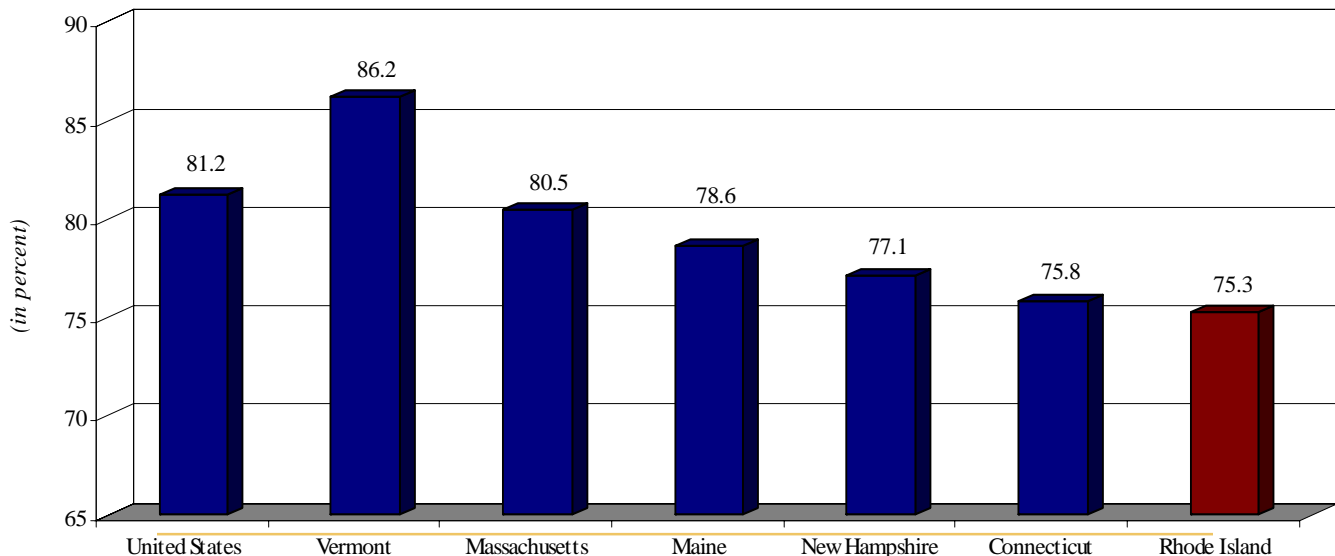
According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Rhode Island women working full-time earned a median weekly wage of \$700 in 2010. This was 75.3 percent of what full-time working males earned that year - the lowest earnings ratio in New England and the 44th lowest in the country. Over the past twelve years, Rhode Island has seen its female-to-male earnings ratio grow from a low of 71.2 percent in 1998 to a high of 83.9 percent in 2007. This past year, Rhode Island posted a decline of 2.5 percentage points, dropping from 77.8 percent in 2009 to 75.3 percent in 2010.

Regionally, Vermont (86.2%) reported the smallest earnings differential between women and men, followed by Massachusetts (80.5%), Maine (78.6%), New Hampshire (77.1%), Connecticut (75.8%), and Rhode Island (75.3%). Throughout the country, female-to-male earnings ratios ranged from a high of 91.3 percent in the Delaware to just 68.8 percent in West Virginia. Nationwide, women earned 81.2 percent of what men did in 2010. Vermont was the only New England state to report an earnings ratio above the national average. The reasons for these earnings differentials between women and men vary. Although job discrimination is most often cited as the main reason women earn less than men, female worker earnings can also be impacted by breaks in or changes to their labor force participation (i.e. due to family responsibilities) and occupational mix due to physical differences between the sexes. For example, men generally have more natural physical strength than women and therefore be better suited to well-paying heavy construction jobs.

The earnings ratio between Ocean State women and men working full-time peaked in 2007. Whereas Rhode Island women had earned 71.2 percent of what men did in 1998, the ratio had improved to 83.9 percent by 2007. This increase of 12.7 percentage points was the highest reported in the nation, followed by North Dakota (+10.4 percentage points) and Connecticut (+10.0 percentage points). The United States as a whole increased by 3.9 percentage points, while five states, including Massachusetts, and the District of Columbia saw their earnings ratio decrease. However, between 2007 and 2010, Rhode Island women saw their earnings fall in comparison to their male counterparts by 8.6 percentage points, from 83.9 in 2007 to 75.3 in 2010, the largest decrease in the nation during this period. Nationally, the female-to-male earnings ratio improved by 1.0 percentage point during this period, from 80.2 percent in 2007 to 81.2 percent in 2010.

Between 1998 and 2010, Rhode Island women experienced a faster growth in median weekly earnings than men did. In 1998, females earned a median weekly wage of \$455 compared to \$638 earned by males. By 2010, women's median weekly earnings had increased by 53.8 percent (+\$245) to \$700, the 15th largest percentage gain over the past twelve years nationally, but the smallest percentage gain in New England. In contrast, the median weekly earnings of Ocean State males rose to \$930, a 45.8 percent (+\$292) increase. In Rhode Island, women (\$700) in 2010 earn roughly what men (\$708) did in 2001.

**Women's Earnings as a Percent of Men's**  
*United States and the New England states, 2010*

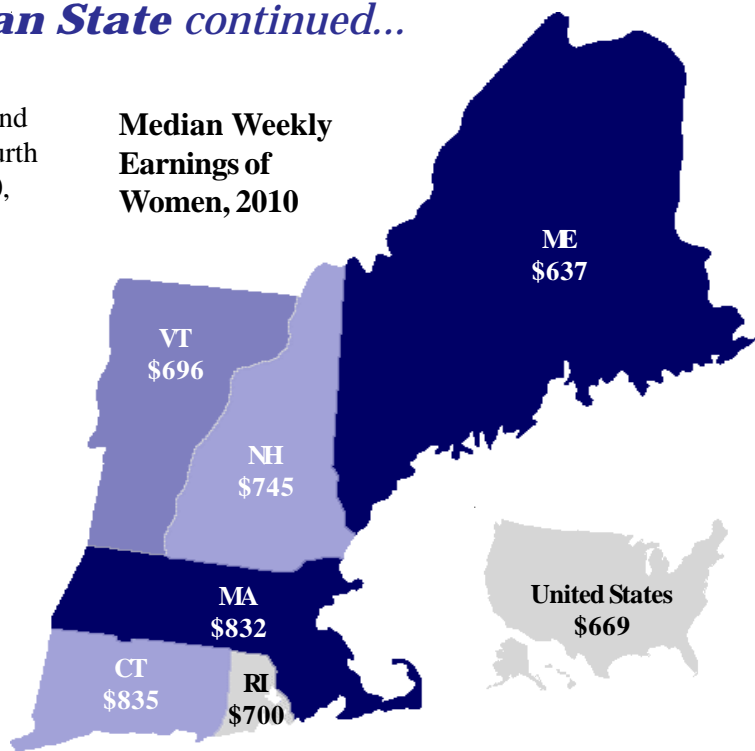


## Women's Earnings in the Ocean State continued...

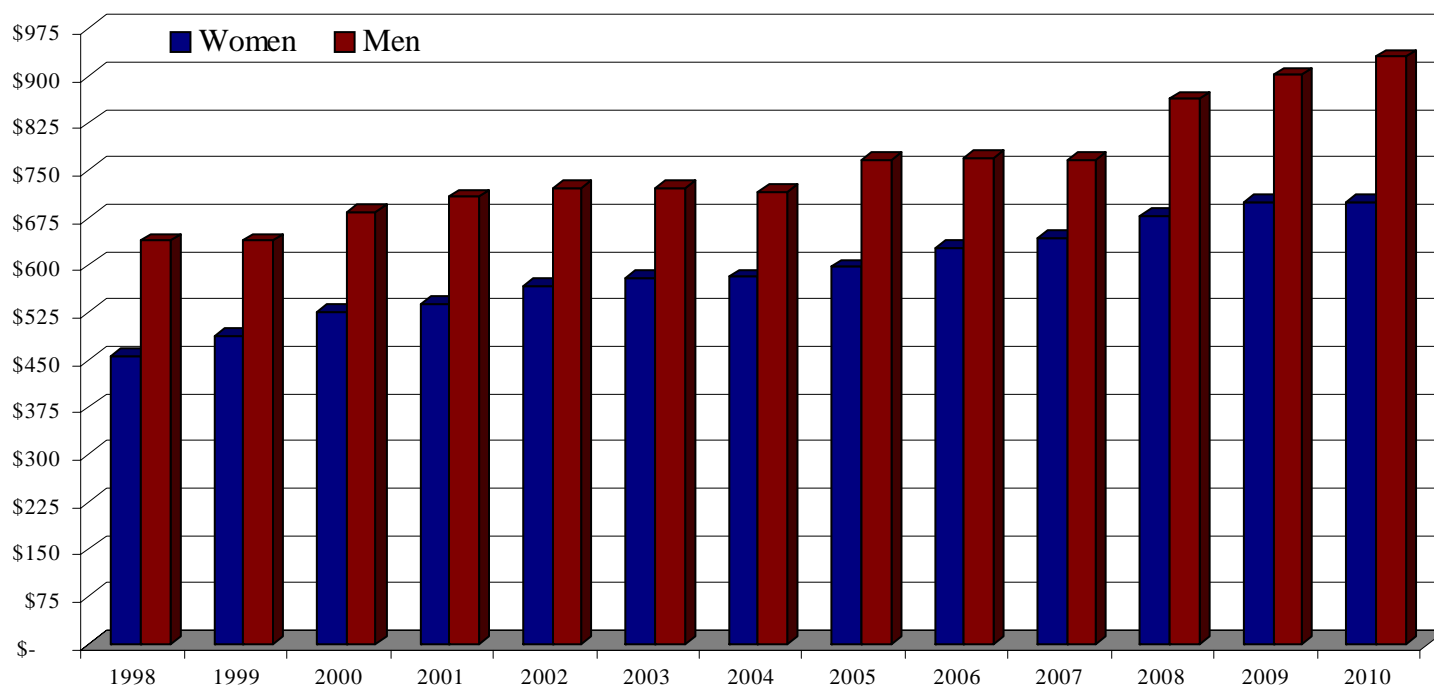
The weekly earnings of Rhode Island women declined in comparison to other New England states between 2009 and 2010. At \$700, women in the Ocean State earned the fourth highest median weekly earnings total in the region in 2010, trailing female wage and salary workers in Connecticut (\$835), Massachusetts (\$832), and New Hampshire (\$745).

The median weekly earnings of Ocean State women decreased by 0.1 percent (-\$1) between 2009 and 2010. However, in 2010, Rhode Island men saw their median weekly earnings rise by 3.2 percent (+\$29). In New England, Massachusetts (+4.4%) had the highest growth rate in median weekly earnings by women, followed by Vermont (+4.2%) and New Hampshire (+4.1%).

In 2010, women workers in the Ocean State earned the 15th highest median weekly wage (\$700) in the United States, above the national median of \$669. Women's median weekly earnings ranged from a high of \$965 in the District of Columbia to a low of \$530 in Arkansas.



**Median Weekly Earnings of Rhode Island Women and Men, 1998-2010**



Data is taken from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Highlights of Women's Earnings* series, 1998-2010. Earnings data refers to the median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers, 16 years and over, as measured by the CPS. Data has not been adjusted for inflation.

### For more Rhode Island Labor Market Information...

At LMI, our mission is to conduct economic research and analysis that promotes a better understanding of the Rhode Island economy. Our data, including a variety of publications, are available on-line at: [www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/](http://www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/). If you have any questions or would like further information regarding Rhode Island's labor market conditions, please contact us at (401) 462-8740. We look forward to hearing from you!

DLT is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids & services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. TTY via RI Relay 711