State of Illinois
Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion

Race and Gender Wage Report
Commission on Equity and Inclusion
Fiscal Year 2025

Executive Summary

The FY25 Race and Gender Wage (RGW) Report provides a comprehensive analysis of wage disparities across Illinois State agencies and public institutions of higher education (PIHEs). Drawing from data submitted by 115 entities, the report identifies persistent gaps in earnings across race, gender, and intersectional demographics.

Key findings show that:

Women continue to earn less than men across both PIHEs and State agencies, with average gaps of approximately $10,000 and $5,000 respectively.

Black or African American employees, particularly women, experience some of the lowest average wages across the State workforce.

Hispanic or Latino employees also experience notable wage disparities, consistent with national research showing some of the largest gaps among major demographic groups.

Asian employees at PIHEs continue to earn higher average salaries, a trend consistent with national research on occupational clustering. Many Asian employees are concentrated in specialized, higher paid academic fields such as engineering, computer science, and other STEM disciplines, which typically command higher salaries due to advanced degree requirements and market driven compensation.

The salary gap between the highest and lowest paid racial groups is $28,000 at PIHEs and $17,000 at State agencies.

Year Over Year Comparison

Compared to FY24, the FY25 data reveals several notable trends. Participation increased from 110 to 115 reporting entities, improving the dataset's comprehensiveness. Wage disparities across race and gender remained consistent with prior findings, though slight shifts were observed. For example, the gender wage gap at PIHEs narrowed marginally, while the gap at State agencies remained relatively stable. Representation patterns also remained consistent, with White employees comprising the majority of the workforce across both sectors. However, the FY25 data shows a modest increase in the number of Black or African American employees reported by PIHEs. These year-over-year comparisons underscore the persistence of structural disparities and highlight the need for continued monitoring and targeted interventions.

These disparities have broad implications for economic stability, workforce retention, and community wellbeing. The report concludes with recommendations to strengthen pay equity, improve recruitment and retention practices, and support a more inclusive and equitable workforce across Illinois.

Introduction

The Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion (CEI) was established through the passage of 30 ILCS 574/40-10, with the intent of furthering the State's commitment to equity and inclusion in State procurement and hiring processes. CEI supports minorities, women, people with disabilities, and veterans by providing fair access to job and contracting opportunities with the State. CEI strives to create a more equitable and inclusive society where everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources. CEI accomplishes these aspirational goals by fostering collaboration, providing valuable resources, and implementing effective strategies to address the challenges and disparities faced by marginalized communities.

CEI's authority to collect and publish race and gender wage data is established under 30 ILCS 574/40 20, which requires the Commission to produce annual Race and Gender Wage Reports. This mandate supports CEI's broader mission under 30 ILCS 574/40 10 to advance equity and inclusion in State procurement and hiring. Each State agency and public institution of higher education (PIHE) contributes to advancing these efforts by submitting a report detailing race and gender, as well as wage earnings.

The RGW report provides CEI with a comprehensive, data-driven understanding of compensation patterns across Illinois State agencies and public institutions of higher education. By examining wage outcomes across demographic groups, the report highlights disparities, trends, and structural barriers that may influence equitable access to State employment and career advancement. These insights equip CEI to identify where inequities persist and where targeted strategies may be needed to support a fair and inclusive workforce.

The findings of the RGW report directly inform CEI's work to advance diversity in State hiring. CEI uses this statewide analysis to guide its engagement with agencies, strengthen technical assistance, and illuminate opportunities to improve recruitment, outreach, and retention of underrepresented groups. By grounding its efforts in empirical evidence, CEI ensures that its recommendations and initiatives are responsive to documented workforce realities and aligned with the State's commitment to equitable employment practices. The RGW report therefore serves as both a transparency tool for the public and a strategic resource that supports Illinois in building a more inclusive and representative State workforce.

What's New in FY25

The FY25 RGW Report incorporates several methodological and analytical improvements that strengthen the accuracy and usefulness of statewide wage insights. Participation increased from 110 to 115 reporting entities, resulting in a more complete dataset. CEI also refined its data cleaning methodology by standardizing the treatment of part-time employees, minimum-wage earners, and incomplete records. This year's report includes expanded contextual framing, deeper analysis of structural factors contributing to wage disparities, and a more detailed examination of intersectional wage gaps.

Compared to FY24, the FY25 report reflects expanded participation and improved data quality. The year over year pattern remains consistent, though FY25 shows a slight narrowing of the gender wage gap at PIHEs and a modest increase in Black or African American representation. These shifts highlight both persistent structural disparities and areas of emerging progress.

Wage gaps across race and gender remain persistent, with women earning less than men in both sectors and Black or African American employees - particularly women - experiencing the lowest average wages. Asian employees at PIHEs continue to earn higher average salaries, reflecting occupational clustering in specialized, higher paid academic and STEM fields. Representation patterns remain largely stable, with modest increases in some demographic groups.

Methodology

Data quality improved significantly in FY25 due to increased participation, more complete submissions, and enhanced data cleaning procedures. CEI standardized the treatment of part time and minimum wage employees, removed duplicate or incomplete records, and clarified the separation of PIHE and State agency data due to their fundamentally different workforce structures.

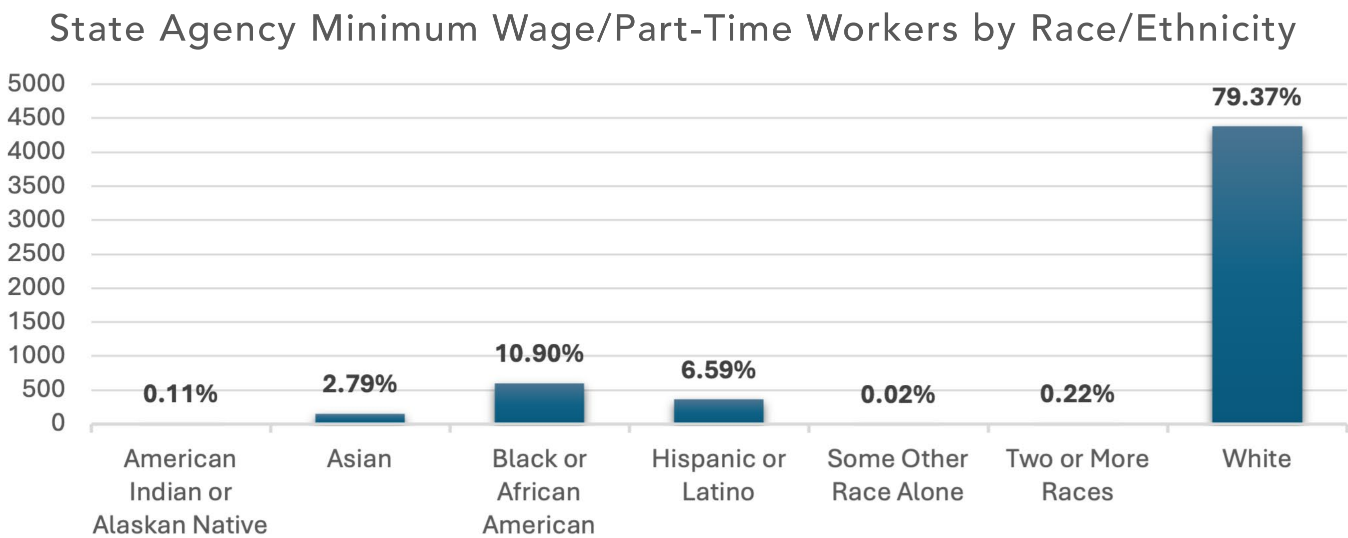
Data collection processes for this report were derived from 115 entities, broken down as follows: 51 Public Institutions of Higher Education and 64 agencies. E-mail correspondence with an Excel document was sent to each entity, asking participants to populate pertinent fields with employee information from the 2025 fiscal year. Agencies were asked to self-report. While some entities use HRIS (Human Resources Information Systems) not all agencies or public institutions did so, and many used their own internal documentation to report. CEI relied on entity certification of the data as being complete and accurate as CEI does not have access to internal employee data.

All data obtained was then collated into an Excel document for further analysis. Public Institutions of Higher Education and state agencies were analyzed separately when comparing race and gender wage disparities because they operate under fundamentally different workforce structures, job classifications, and compensation systems, including distinct faculty tenure models, collective bargaining agreements, civil service frameworks, and pay scales, making direct comparisons across the two sectors methodologically unreliable and potentially misleading.

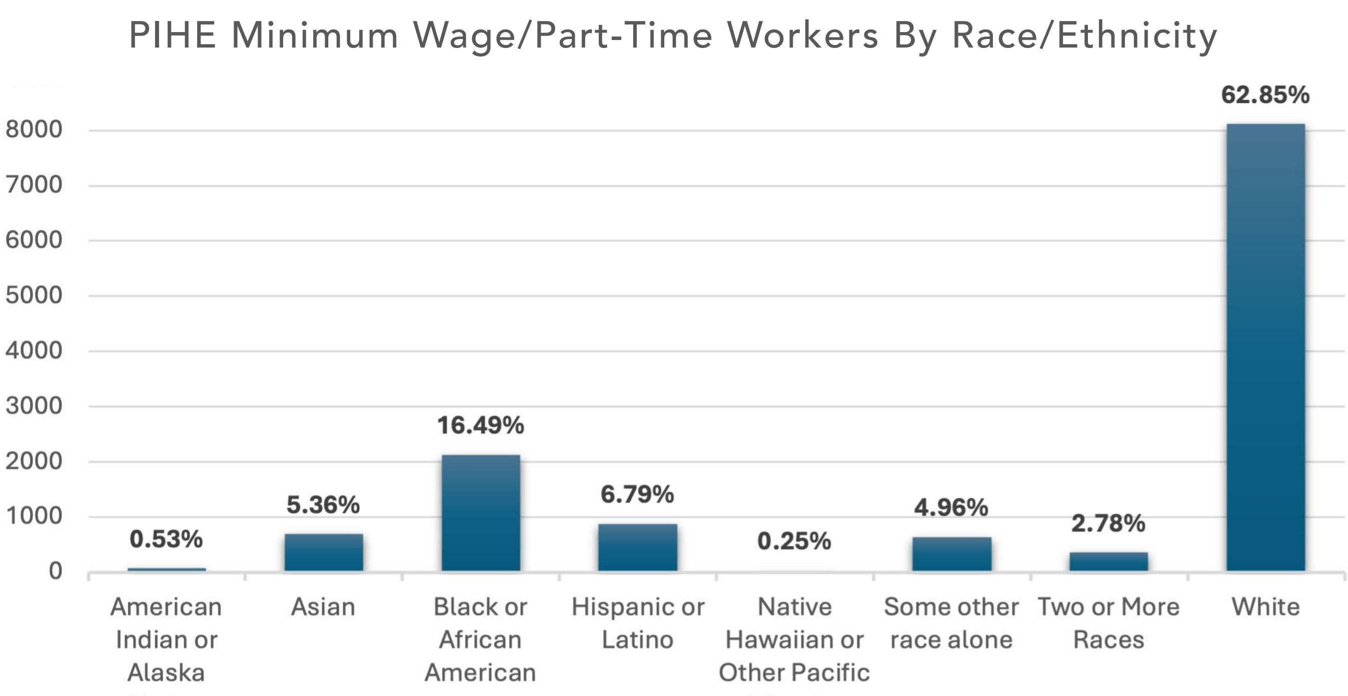
State agencies and PIHEs were subsequently split into two categories. Employees who earned minimum wage due to working part-time or not working at their respective organization during the full fiscal year were further broken out. The minimum wage threshold was calculated using the Illinois Minimum Wage Law (820 ILCS 105). The 2025 minimum wage of $15.00/hour equates to $31,200 annually, compared to $29,120 in FY24 when the minimum wage was $14.00/hour. The data was then cleaned for accuracy and completeness. Duplicate data or data with partial or no relevant information were removed from the totals. Once the data had been cured, it was analyzed to highlight wage disparities across race and gender and the intersection between multiple demographics.

In addition, the analysis reflects overall, uncontrolled averages rather than comparisons within the same roles. This approach captures the full workforce picture and highlights broader structural patterns in representation and earnings across race and gender, rather than isolating pay differences within specific classifications.

Employees Making Less Than $31,200 per Year

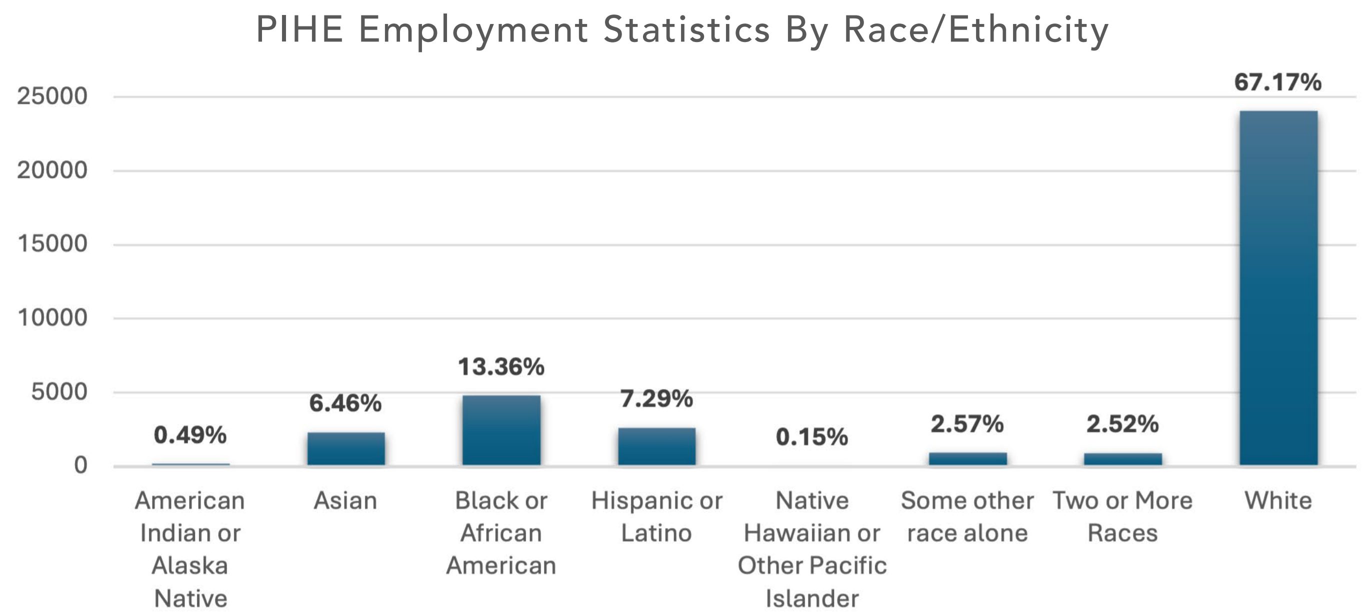


State agencies hired 5,522 workers who were paid minimum wage, worked part-time, or did not work the full fiscal year in 2025. Of these, 4,383 (79.37%) identified as White, 602 (10.90%) as Black or African American, 364 (6.59%) as Hispanic or Latino, and 154 (2.79%) as Asian. Although White employees make up most of this group, the distribution also highlights meaningful representation among Black and Hispanic workers, underscoring how part time and minimum wage roles are filled across multiple demographic groups.

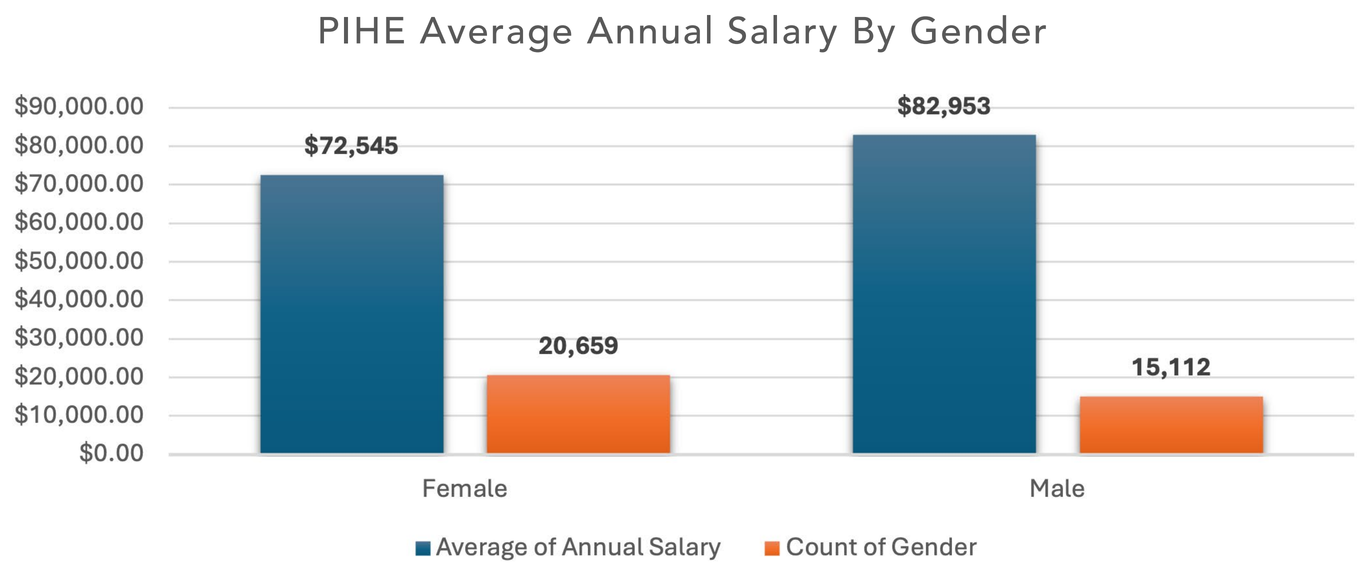


PIHEs employed 12,914 employees who were considered part-time minimum wage earners or did not work the full fiscal year. Of these, 8,117 (62.85%) identified as White, 2,129 (16.49%) as Black or African American, 877 (6.79%) as Hispanic or Latino, 692 (5.36%) as Asian, 640 (4.96%) as Some Other Race Alone, 359 (2.78%) as Two or More Races, 68 (0.53%) as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 32 (0.25%) as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The broader racial diversity within PIHEs is reflected in this segment of the workforce, with Black, Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial employees collectively comprising more than one third of minimum wage or part time positions.

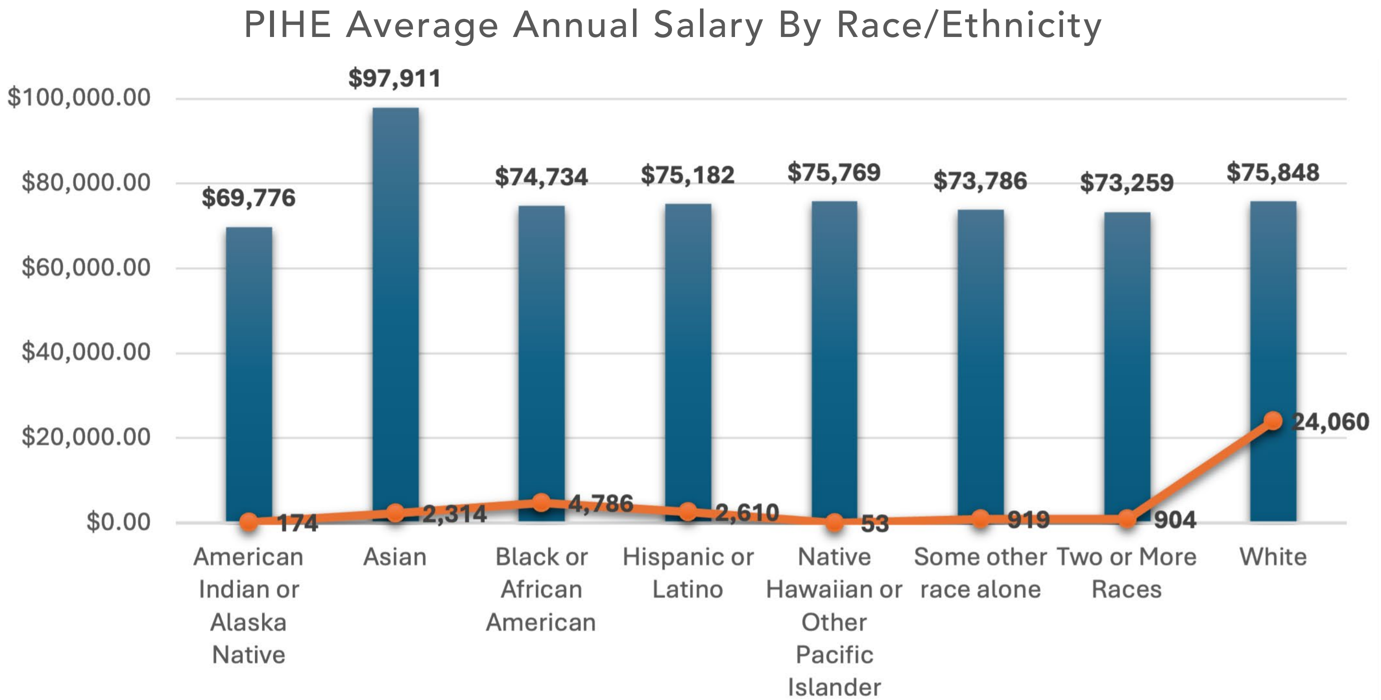
Full-Time Employees at Public Institutions of Higher Education



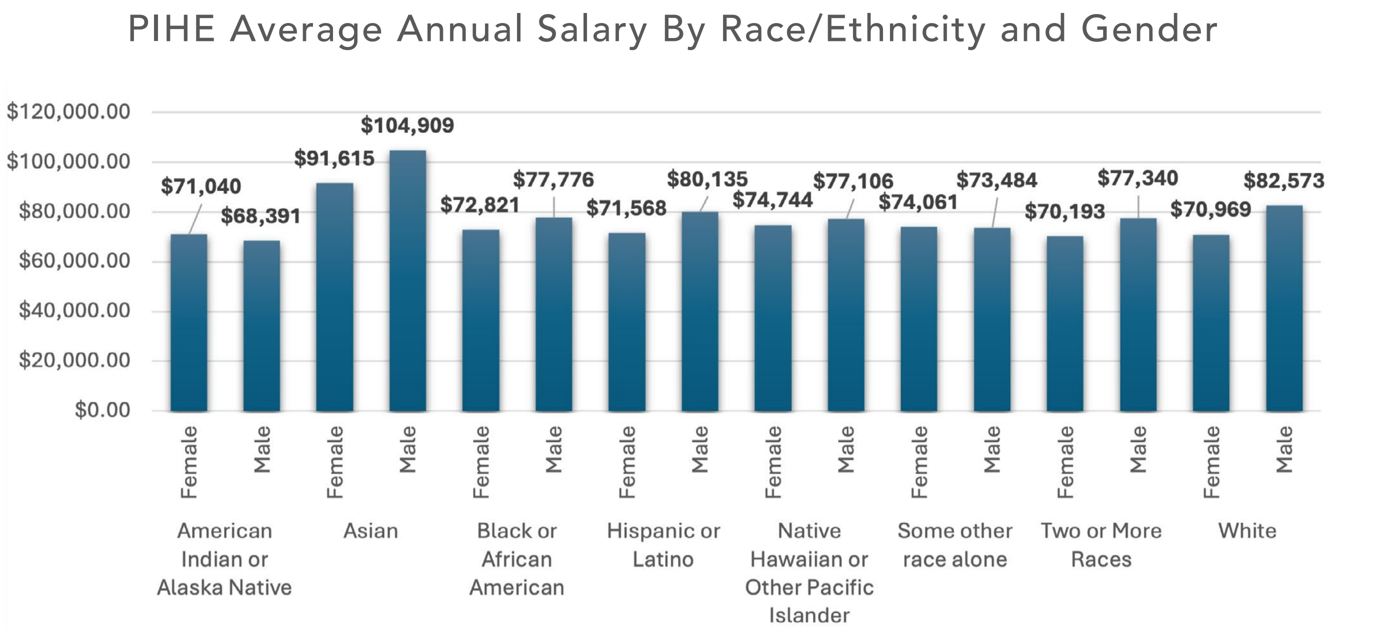
PIHEs employed 35,820 people in Illinois who made over $31,200 per annum. These employees overwhelmingly identified as White (67%), with Black or African American being the next largest demographic (13%), followed by those who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino (7%). The two least represented demographics in the workforce for PIHEs were American Indian or Alaska Native (174 individuals or 0.49%) and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (53 individuals or 0.15%).



Breaking down average pay by gender, the average salary of those who identified as male was just over $10,000 higher than for those who identified as female, despite employing more women in the workforce–PIHEs employed just over 20,000 people who identified as female and 15,000 who identified as male.

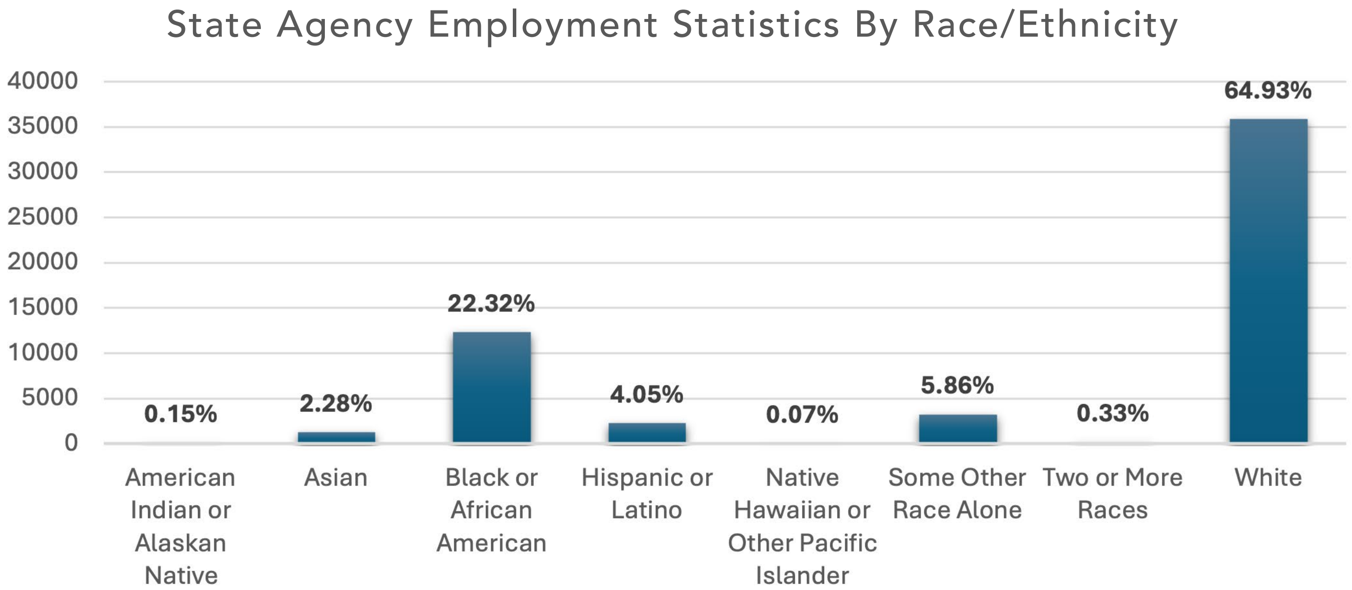


Breaking down the average salaries by race and ethnicity alone showed slightly more equality in salary distribution. While people identifying as Asian (2,314 individuals) earned significantly more on average, fewer of them were employed compared to other groups. White individuals made up the majority of the workforce (24,000 individuals), followed by Black or African American (nearly 5,000) and Hispanic or Latino (2,610). Overall, the salary gap between the highest- and lowest-paid groups was $28,000.

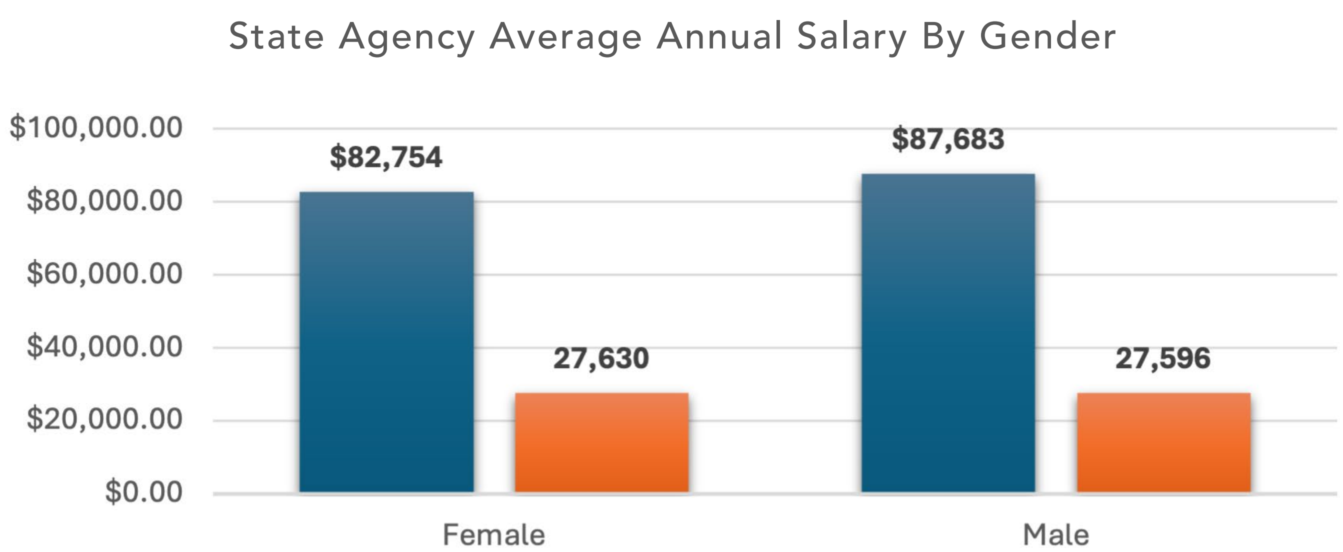


When looking at the disparities intersecting both race and gender, the data shows that on average, women make less than men. Across nearly all racial and ethnic groups, men earn higher average salaries than women, reflecting a consistent pattern of gender-based pay differences within PIHEs.

Full-Time Employees at State Agencies

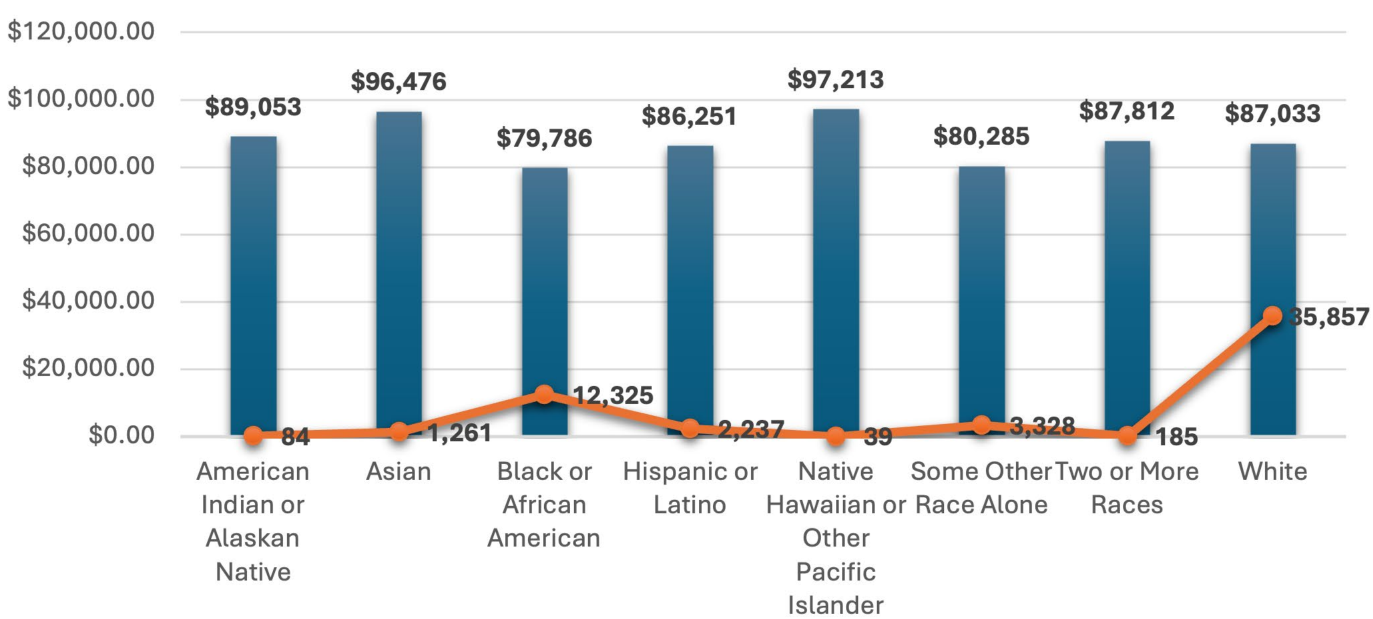


State agencies employed 55,000 people in Illinois who made over $31,200 per annum. These employees were overwhelmingly identified as White (64%), with Black or African American being the next largest demographic group (22%), followed by those who identified their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino (4%) and Some Other Race Alone (5%). The two least represented demographics in the workforce for PIHEs were American Indian or Alaskan Native (84 individuals or 0.15%) and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (39 individuals or 0.07%).



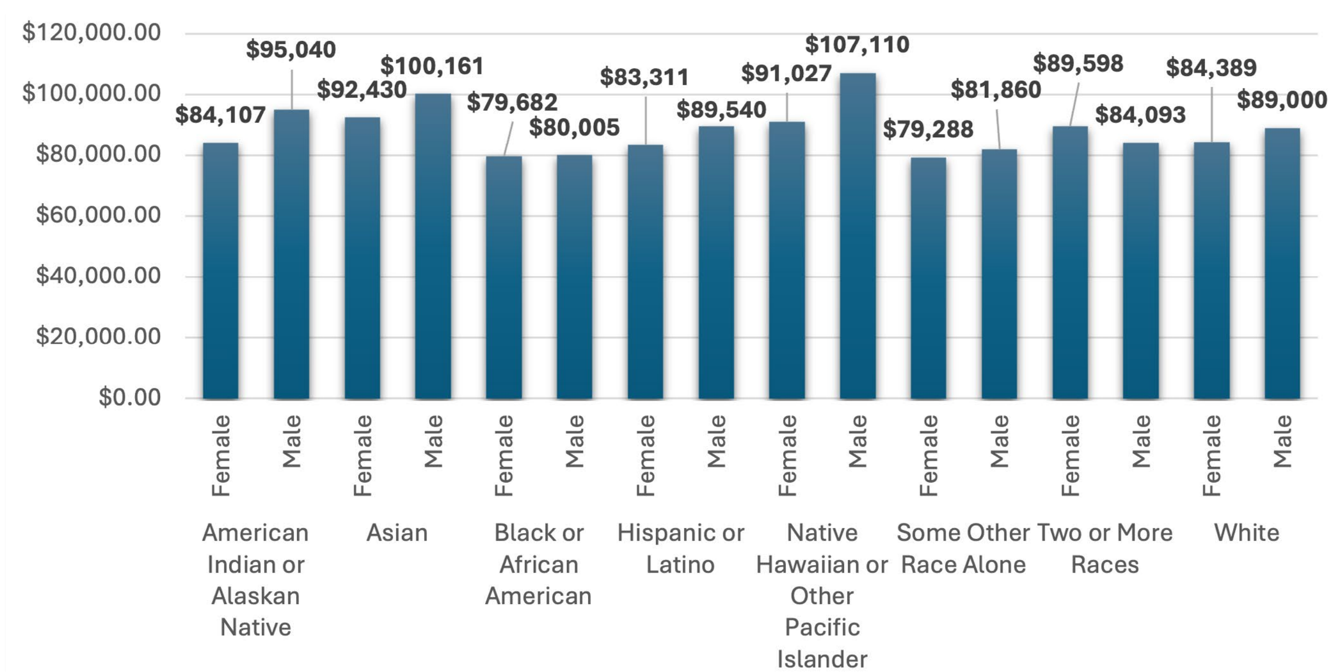
Breaking down the average pay for gender, those who identified as male made nearly $5,000 more than those who identified as female, despite a nearly equal distribution of gender across the State workforce. Despite women representing a larger share of the workforce, the average salary for men remains notably higher, indicating a gender pay gap that spans the agency workforce overall.

State Agency Average Annual Salary By Race/Ethnicity



The average annual salary by race/ethnicity across the workforce shows that Black or African American individuals make significantly less, on average, than most other demographics. White individuals made up the bulk of the workforce (35,000 individuals), followed by Black or African American (12,000), Hispanic or Latino, and Some Other Race Alone. Overall, the difference in average salary between the highest-paid and lowest-paid demographics was $17,000.

State Agency Average Annual Salary By Race/Ethnicity and Gender



Further breaking down this average salary by intersecting race and gender shows that Black or African American women make less than most of their counterparts. The data shows consistent gender based pay gaps within most racial and ethnic groups, with men earning more on average than women, revealing disparities that persist even when controlling for race.

Impact of Disparities

Economic Impacts

Race and gender wage disparities have multifaceted and wide-ranging implications in society at large. The gender wage gap is oftentimes conceptualized as the difference in median wages between men and women who work full-time year-round. The association between wage disparities and inequality is well-established. Wage disparities are interlinked with social inequality, perpetuating economic difficulties for marginalized and underrepresented groups, while also underpinning and sustaining systemic barriers (US Department of Labor, 2024). When considering the intersectionality of race and gender, the implications are oftentimes compounded. Women of color experience greater wage disparities compared to White women and men, as evidenced by data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics showing that Black or African American and Latina women earn significantly less than White men for comparable work (US Department of Labor, 2024). Research highlights that these disparities arise from systemic obstacles such as unequal access to education, discriminatory hiring practices, and occupational segregation (Bishu & Alkadry, 2016). Even with higher educational attainment in many nations, women still face wage disparities, indicating the influence of systemic discrimination factors on income inequality (Blau & Kahn, 2017). The U.S. Department of Labor's 'Bearing the Cost' report more closely examines the results of gender and racial wage gaps. This report reveals that Black or African American women lost $42.7 billion in wages compared to white men in 2023 alone, while Hispanic women lost $53.3 billion (US Department of Labor, 2024). When compared to white, non-Hispanic men, the U.S. Department of Labor report further crystalizes the prevalence of race and gender wage disparities. The report found wage gaps were 20 percent for White (non-Hispanic) women, 31 percent for Black or African American women, and 43 percent for Hispanic women (US Department of Labor, 2024).

Structural Factors Contributing to Wage Disparities

Wage disparities across race and gender are influenced by a range of structural factors that extend beyond individual workplaces. Occupational segregation remains a significant driver, with women and people of color disproportionately represented in lower paying roles and underrepresented in leadership and specialized fields. Regional differences also contribute to wage variation, as employees in rural areas often face limited job opportunities, lower wage scales, and fewer pathways for advancement. Within State government and public institutions of higher education, pipeline challenges - including unequal access to mentorship, professional development, and promotion opportunities - further reinforce disparities. Additionally, recruitment practices and screening processes may inadvertently disadvantage qualified candidates from marginalized groups. These structural factors highlight the importance of systemic reforms, including standardized pay audits, equitable recruitment strategies, and expanded access to career development resources.

Workforce Impacts

Race and gender wage disparities may also have significant effects on employee morale and retention rates. When employees perceive unfair wage gaps, it can lead to decreased morale, which may be a result or cause of wider issues. Feeling undervalued often results in reduced motivation, lower productivity, and decreased job satisfaction. This type of workplace environment typically leads to higher turnover, inefficiencies, and poor engagement with new processes, all of which are costly for organizations. Understanding both the community and societal impacts, as well as individual outcomes, requires considering the micro and macro effects of wage disparities. High employee morale and fair pay foster stability within companies and communities. For instance, positive ripple effects benefit small businesses and overall societal health. Recognizing wage disparities and taking steps to correct them is crucial, as it can enhance personal well-being and promote community and collective prosperity.

Health and Social Impacts

While the costs of these disparities are truly staggering, they have at times become secondary considerations. Nevertheless, wage disparities carry the potential to limit financial resources, which in turn may cause psychological, physical, and social impacts that reduce life choices and overall quality of life. Pay gaps can negatively influence an individual's health and well-being, while also contributing to further deterioration of other measures related to holistic wellness. The social determinants of health (SDOH) serve as a conceptual framework that seeks clarity in identifying factors that contribute to holistic health and wellness. The SDOH are typically categorized into five groups: economic stability, neighborhood and physical environment, healthcare access and quality, educational access and quality, and social and community context. Each of these categories is directly affected by pay equity (or, conversely, pay inequity), further highlighting the necessity for a broader cultural shift toward race and gender pay equality. Additionally, vulnerable populations—such as minorities and disadvantaged or underrepresented individuals and communities—face higher risks of poor outcomes due to greater barriers they encounter throughout society. Recognizing these issues, pay equity is essential for improving living conditions and quality of life across society.

Recommendations

CEI's actionable suggestions for addressing and mitigating wage disparities are summarized below.

- **Wage Transparency** – Being open about wages and salaries helps fight gender and racial pay gaps, fostering minority and underrepresented population's ability to better evaluate their market value and champion fairer wages. When organizations commit to transparent pay scales and conduct structured pay audits, individual traits like gender, race, and disability status become less influential in hiring decisions. Salary transparency laws are a significant step forward. At the national level, the enactment of the Equal Pay Act in 1963 represented a significant legislative advancement in the U.S. aimed at combating wage discrimination on the grounds of gender (Alkadry & Tower, 2011). Several measures to establish viable alternatives have been undertaken since then, with the aim of recalibrating the focus to meet the urgency of the moment, while ultimately codifying new standards into practice. More recently, the Illinois Equal Pay Act (and its amendments) aim to reach these goals. Beginning on January 1, 2025, the Illinois Department of Labor is requiring all job postings by employers with fifteen or more employees include pay scale and benefits information. The main goals of pay transparency are to promote equal pay and give job seekers vital information to make informed decisions. Wage transparency fosters employee empowerment and holds employers accountable for discriminatory practices. These steps help create a fairer and more transparent job market, with the aim of creating a symbiotic relationship between employer and employee. Yet, more can be done in this regard. Advocating for collaborative negotiation methods rather than confrontational salary discussions can also foster fairer pay outcomes. Studies show that jobs in unionized settings often exhibit smaller wage gaps because collective bargaining agreements commonly include standardized pay scales and equity specifications (England, et. al., 2020). Union participation is linked to higher wages for women and improved access to benefits like paid parental leave and job security protections (Hegewisch & Williams-Baron, 2018). Enhancing labor protections, broadening union outreach efforts, and embedding gender equity clauses can further bolster the role of unions in closing the gender pay gap (England, et. al., 2020).

- **Workgroups and Committees** – All entities should aim to establish committees, subcommittees, or workgroups dedicated to overseeing new hires and annual compensation adjustments. Implementing standardized pay equity audits across all organizational departments and levels serves as a benchmark to ensure there are no unfavorable variances based on race and gender. Additionally, this helps protect internal equity and fair compensation for similar roles. Utilizing workgroups composed of individuals with lived experience, including marginalized groups and allies, can inform policy decisions and influence recruitment procedures and philosophies. Employers should continually focus on building groups that can set boundaries regarding implicit and explicit bias to better guide recruitment efforts. Ultimately, each employer's core recruitment philosophy should promote an inclusive strategy that ensures the workforce reflects the diversity they seek. Organizations with diverse leadership have been shown to perform better financially and have higher employee satisfaction levels (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). It is incumbent upon employers to exercise the initiative and promote the good will necessary to create this reality, ultimately sustaining the momentum to foster a fundamental cultural shift with broader lessons extending beyond the workplace. A diverse workforce will continue to foster innovation, creativity, and increase the likelihood of achieving effective outcomes through a measured approach. Workgroups and committees can also create a positive influence in other ways. Differences in professional networking and mentorship affect women's career growth, as they frequently encounter obstacles in accessing equal levels of career support and sponsorship, reinforcing wage inequalities (Cohen & Huffman, 2007). Research indicates that men tend to gain more from informal hiring networks, often being part of professional circles that grant access to higher-paying jobs (Morin, 2025). Improving access to professional mentorship and sponsorship for women can help reduce these disadvantages and improve labor market results (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

- **Education and Training** – Employers often exhibit unconscious preferences for male candidates in leadership roles, resulting in discriminatory recruitment and salary negotiation practices (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Research indicates that implicit biases during performance assessments and salary discussions contribute to the gender pay gap, even in workplaces that claim to be merit-based (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Such biases negatively impact promotion opportunities and salary raises. This bias in evaluations hinders women's career development and reinforces existing pay inequalities (Neumark & Shirley, 2021). Organizations should continuously educate their staff about wage disparities and inequality related to various forms of discrimination and bias. Implicit biases that linger in recruitment, promotions, and salary negotiations continue to put women at a disadvantage (Bertrand, 2020). The intersection of gender with race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status complicates the situation, intensifying income inequalities (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017). It is essential to keep influencing key points within organizations, such as Human Resources and recruitment leaders, on issues related to race and gender disparities. Doing so helps gatekeepers or entry points within the organization approach offers more objectively, reducing bias. Often, the recruitment office is the starting point; in some cases, operational leaders do not have access to candidates because the recruitment team dismisses or rejects them. Sometimes, the hiring manager may not even be aware of the candidates' existence. Therefore, training efforts must focus heavily on recruitment teams. These efforts should also include training operational leaders to select the most qualified candidates with minimal bias. Employers must ensure that the algorithms used in these processes are unbiased. Recruitment offices should have easy-to-use tools and algorithms for setting offer rates. While operational leaders focus on skills and behavior during interviews, recruitment offices are responsible for establishing fair wages based on experience and other factors. Additionally, it is vital for leaders in management roles to proactively advocate for candidates through conversations and by investing time and effort with recruiters to assess candidates' qualifications. Notwithstanding, additional efforts and continued progress can be made through continuous education and training efforts. Combating stereotypes through targeted initiatives, such as mentorship programs and unbiased career counseling, has been proposed to enhance equitable participation in the labor market (Blickenstaff, 2005). Enhancing mentorship programs and leadership training initiatives, along with affirmative action policies, can improve the effectiveness of efforts to close gender wage gaps (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Implementing standardized salary bands, pay transparency rules, and negotiation training can help create more equitable conditions for women. Moreover, research also points to the utility of utilizing clearly defined negotiation frameworks—such as those within unionized work environments or organizations with formal pay-setting procedures—helping reduce the gender gap in negotiation results (Hegewisch & Williams-Baron, 2018).

- **Legislation and Policies** – Legislation aimed at unlocking significant and lasting impact through a principled approach must simultaneously and deliberately maintain a vigilant and resolute stance toward achieving race and gender equality, while also becoming a force for economic progress. Countries with comprehensive family-friendly policies, including paid parental leave and subsidized childcare, generally demonstrate narrower gender pay gaps (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Implementing policies that foster work-life balance and shared parenting responsibilities is essential to address the economic effects of unpaid labor on women's earning potential (Babcock & Laschever, 2003). Government policies and labor laws play a crucial role in either alleviating or worsening wage disparities. Countries that offer robust parental leave, subsidized childcare, and wage transparency laws typically show smaller gender pay gaps (Babcock & Laschever, 2003). Strengthening anti-discrimination statutes, broadening corporate inclusivity initiatives, and enforcing pay transparency practices are essential steps in rectifying these inequities (Carpenter et al., 2020). Policy efforts must also consider regional differences that contribute to lived experiences. Women residing in rural regions face heightened obstacles due to limited job options, lower wage scales, and reduced access to professional growth resources (Neumark & Shirley, 2021). Policy measures such as increased investment in rural job training programs, telework opportunities, and enhanced childcare service infrastructure are critical to alleviating geographic wage disparities (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017). The Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program was established in 2021 and serves as an example of the type of sustained programming efforts needed to increase access to greater opportunity for historically underrepresented populations. It is indicative of the fact that the principled approach and unbounding determination of leadership in Illinois continues to pave the path toward cooperative engagement and sustained impact for all. These recommendations reflect that same deep commitment to truly embracing the task at hand and galvanizing support for a more equitable and inclusive society for all Illinoisans.

CEI recognizes that wage disparities are not simply statistical findings - they are reflections of lived experiences that shape the economic security, career mobility, and well being of Illinois workers. The FY25 RGW Report provides a clear, data driven foundation for action. It affirms the progress Illinois has made through intentional policy leadership, and it highlights where continued investment and structural reform are needed. Our responsibility is to ensure that every agency, institution, and partner across the State has the tools, support, and accountability necessary to advance equitable employment practices. This work is central to CEI's mission and essential to building a workforce that truly reflects the values and diversity of Illinois.

The findings of the FY25 Race and Gender Wage (RGW) Report underscore the continued need for coordinated statewide action to address persistent wage disparities across race, gender, and intersecting identities. These disparities reflect structural barriers that influence access to employment, career advancement, and long-term economic stability. CEI can leverage this year's data to support agencies and public institutions of higher education (PIHEs) in strengthening equitable hiring, compensation, and workforce development practices. Illinois has already taken significant steps to advance pay equity and expand access to opportunity. Several existing State programs and statutory frameworks offer strong models for addressing the systemic factors that contribute to wage gaps. Some examples of this are:

- **Illinois Equal Pay Act & Equal Pay Registration Certification (PA 101 656; PA 102 36)**: Requires private employers with 100 or more Illinois employees to submit wage and demographic data to the Illinois Department of Labor, promoting transparency, reducing discriminatory pay practices, and reinforcing statewide pay equity standards.

- **Illinois Works Pre Apprenticeship Program**: Provides training, wrap around supports, and direct pathways into the construction trades for women, people of color, and veterans. In 2026, the State awarded more than $17 million to 39 program recipients, serving nearly 2,000 community members statewide and expanding equitable access to high wage, high demand careers.

- **State Construction Minority and Female Building Trades Act (30 ILCS 35)**: Requires annual demographic reporting from apprenticeship programs, strengthening transparency and supporting equitable access to skilled trades pathways for underrepresented groups.

- **Job Training and Economic Development (JTED) Program**: Offers targeted workforce training and barrier reduction services for unemployed, underemployed, and underrepresented Illinoisans, including youth and justice involved individuals. JTED's community based model helps expand access to career pathways that historically excluded marginalized populations.

These initiatives reflect Illinois' sustained commitment to centering equity within workforce development. The State's progress has been recognized nationally: Site Selection Magazine recently ranked Illinois #1 in the Midwest and #3 nationally for workforce development in 2026, highlighting the impact of strategic investments in equitable access to opportunity.

Building on these efforts, the FY25 RGW findings can be used to:

- Support agencies and PIHEs in conducting annual pay equity audits to identify and address disparities.
- Strengthen recruitment, outreach, and hiring practices to expand access for underrepresented groups.
- Promote leadership development and advancement pathways for women and people of color.
- Encourage the adoption of transparent compensation structures, standardized salary bands, and equitable negotiation frameworks.
- Align workforce equity strategies with broader State initiatives that reduce barriers to employment and expand access to high quality jobs.

By integrating these insights into strategic planning and operational decision making, Illinois can continue advancing toward a more equitable, inclusive, and representative workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.

Advancing pay equity in Illinois requires more than identifying disparities; it requires sustained, coordinated action to address the structural conditions shaping workforce outcomes. The FY25 RGW Report provides a clear, data driven foundation for this work, highlighting both areas of progress and persistent inequities across race, gender, and intersecting identities. By aligning employment practices with evidence based strategies, strengthening accountability through transparent reporting, and leveraging statewide initiatives that expand access to high quality employment pathways, Illinois can continue building a workforce rooted in fairness, inclusion, and opportunity. This report affirms CEI's commitment to ensuring that every worker across every agency and institution has equitable access to wages, advancement, and the economic security necessary to thrive.

Conclusion

This RGW report exemplifies a collaborative effort led by CEI to address disparities faced by marginalized communities. While one main goal of this report was to support ongoing efforts toward equity and inclusion, consistent with the Commission's mission and vision, more work is needed in this area. For the RGW report, data was collected from 115 entities (51 public institutions of higher education and 64 agencies). The following section summarizes key findings for public institutions of higher education and agencies in Illinois.

Public institutions of higher education employed 35,820 individuals who earned over $31,200 annually across Illinois, with the following demographic breakdown: 67% White, 13% Black or African American, 7% Hispanic or Latino, and less than 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. On average, male employees at public institutions of higher education earned $10,408 more than females. Public institutions of higher education employed just over 20,000 females and 15,000 males. Individuals identifying as Asian earned significantly more than other races or ethnicities, with an average salary of $97,943, although fewer Asian employees were employed compared to other groups. Overall, the salary gap between the highest-paid and lowest-paid demographics was just over $28,000. When examining race and gender disparities together, females earned less on average than males.

State agencies across Illinois employed over 55,000 individuals earning more than $31,200 annually. The majority identified as White (64%), with Black or African American employees accounting for 22%, Hispanic or Latino for 4%, and individuals identifying as Some Other Race Alone making up 5%. The two least represented groups in the workforce were American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, each comprising less than 1%. When examining pay by gender, it was found that males earned nearly $5,000 more than females on average. Analyzing salary by race and ethnicity revealed that Black or African American employees tend to earn less, on average, than most other groups. Overall, the salary gap between the highest-paid and lowest-paid demographics was $16,000. Further analysis showed that Black or African American women earn less than most of their counterparts.

Acknowledgments

CEI wishes to acknowledge the contributions of various stakeholders, without whom this report would not have been possible. Each agency, board, commission, and PIHE that participated in this report has our sincere and full gratitude. The positive change we aim to achieve across Illinois and society at large would not happen without your partnership and collaboration. CEI appreciates the patience and support of every entity that fully engaged in this effort. Additionally, CEI thanks the Governor's Office for its ongoing assistance and support in developing this report.

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