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# **The Future of Low Wage Work in Metropolitan American**

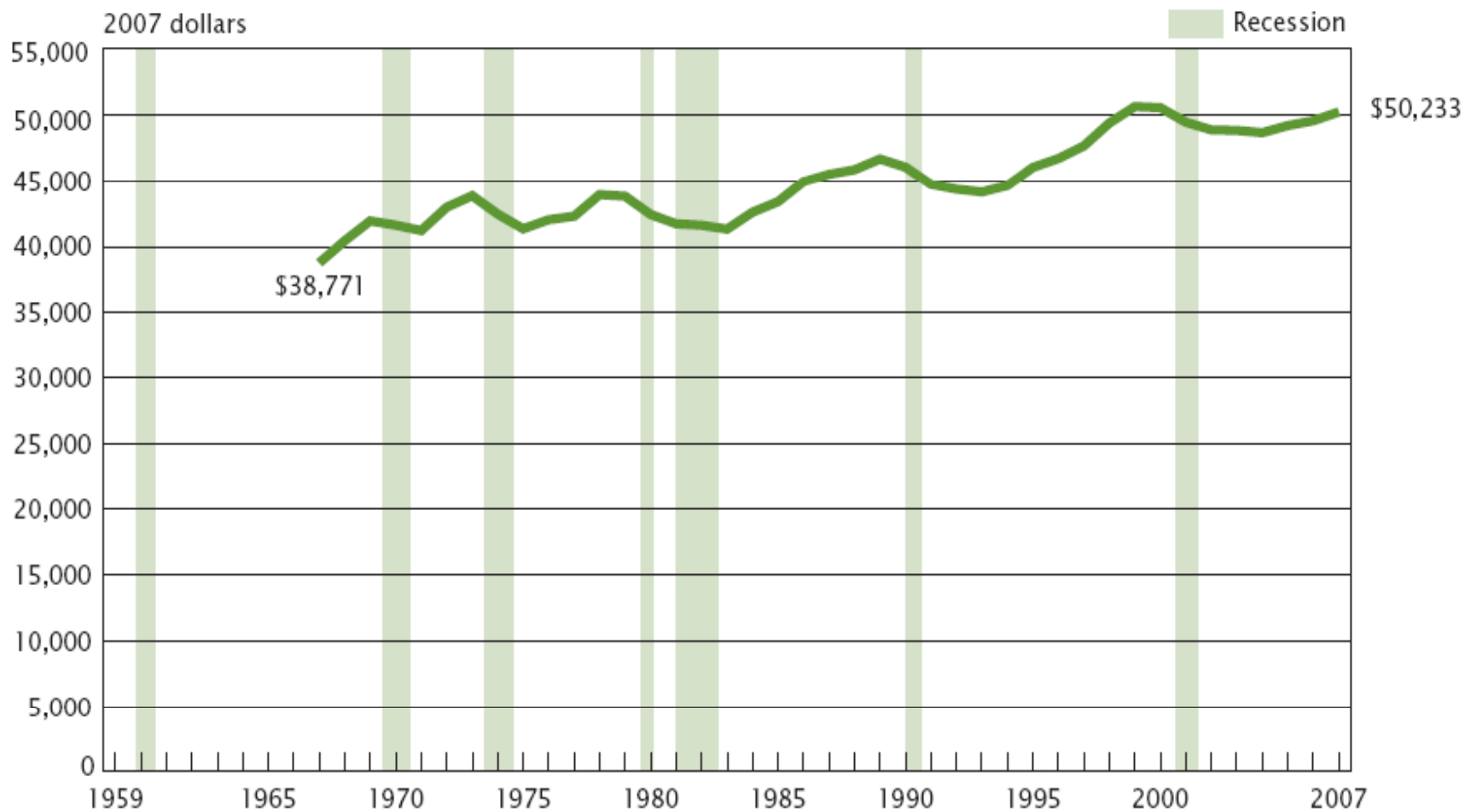
**Discussion: New Economic and Family Contexts**

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Figure 1.  
**Real Median Household Income: 1967 to 2007**

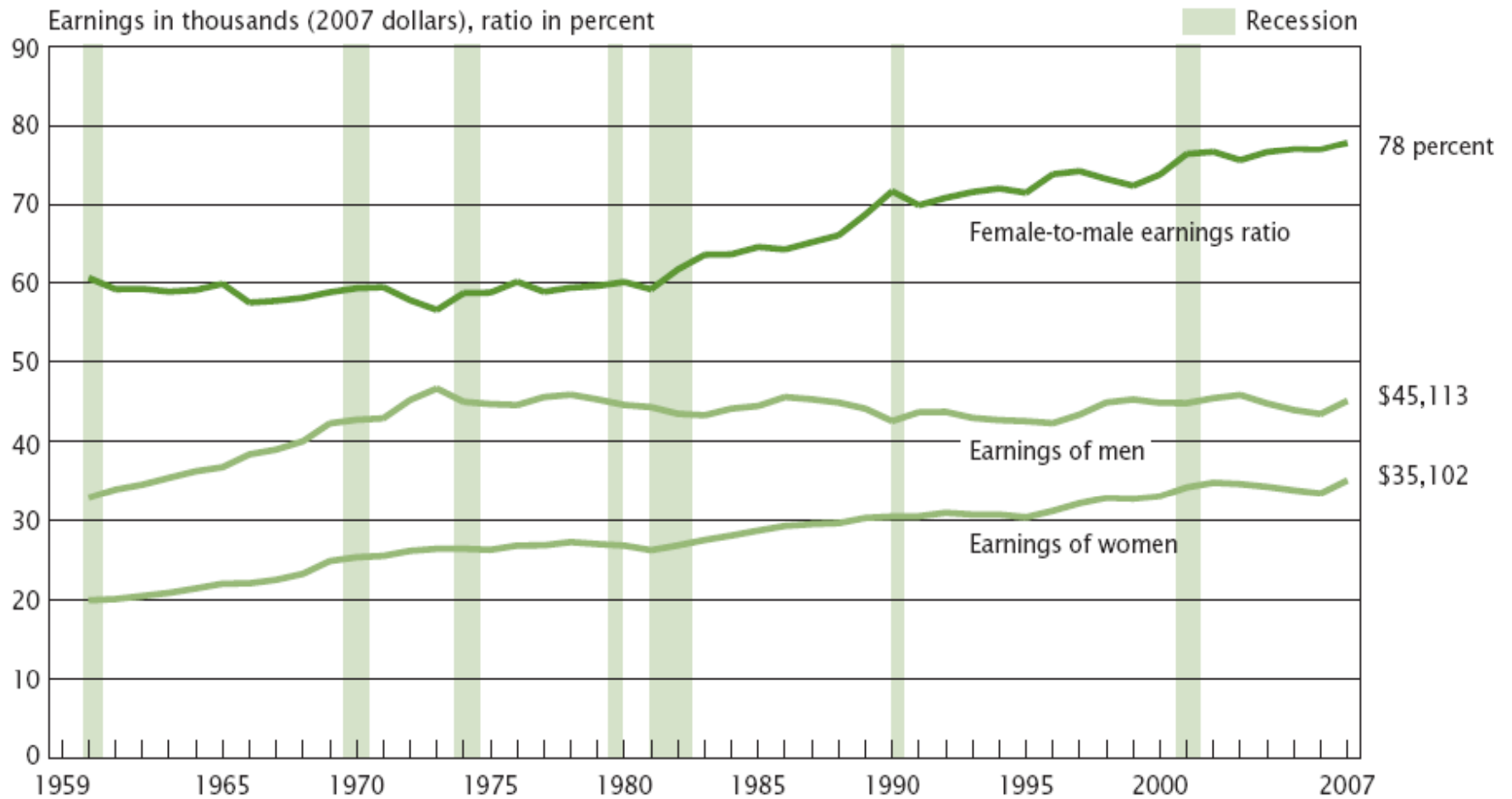


Note: Median household income data are not available before 1967. For information on recessions, see Appendix A.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1968 to 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Figure 2.

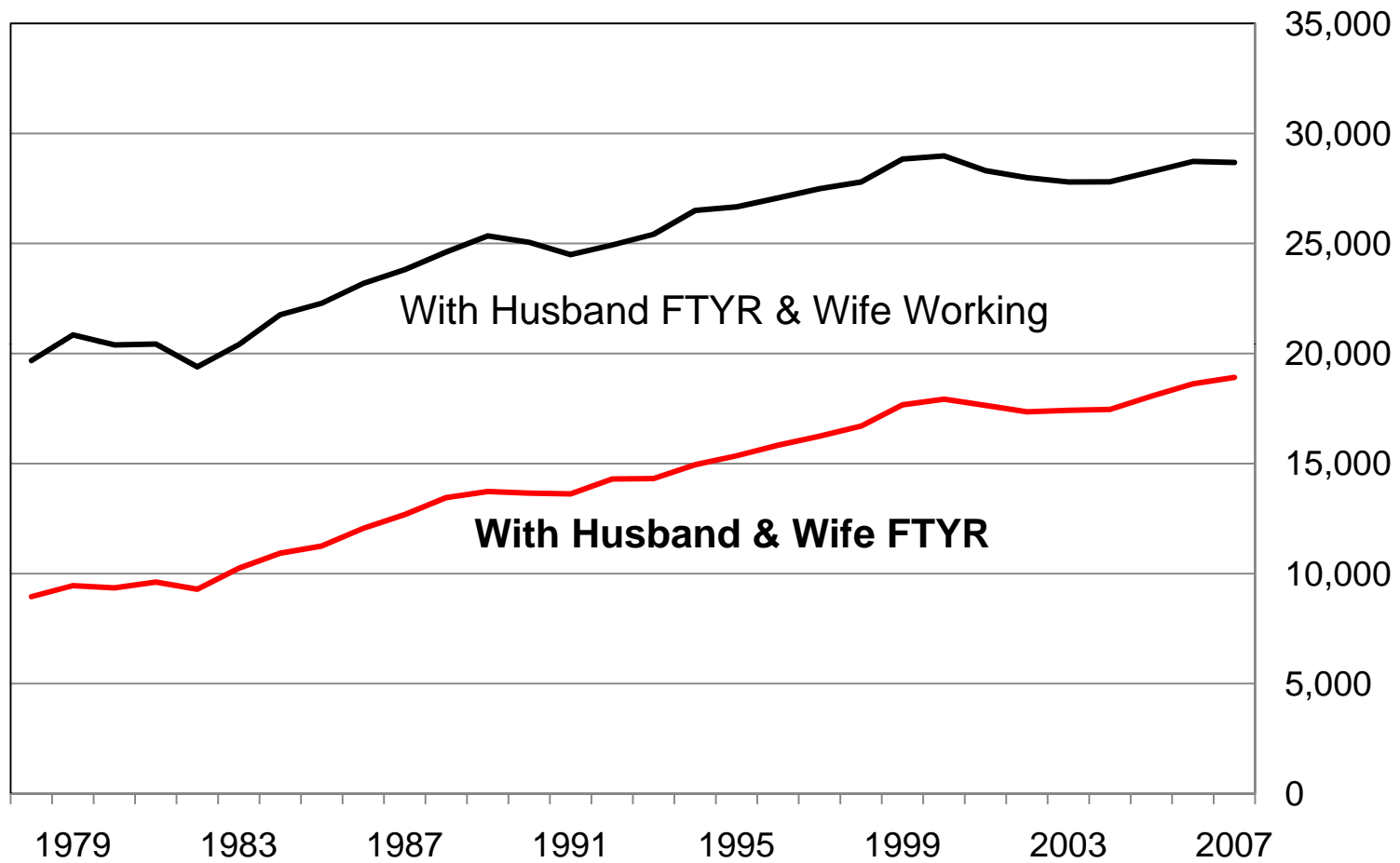
### Female-to-Male Earnings Ratio and Median Earnings of Full-Time, Year-Round Workers 15 Years and Older by Sex: 1960 to 2007



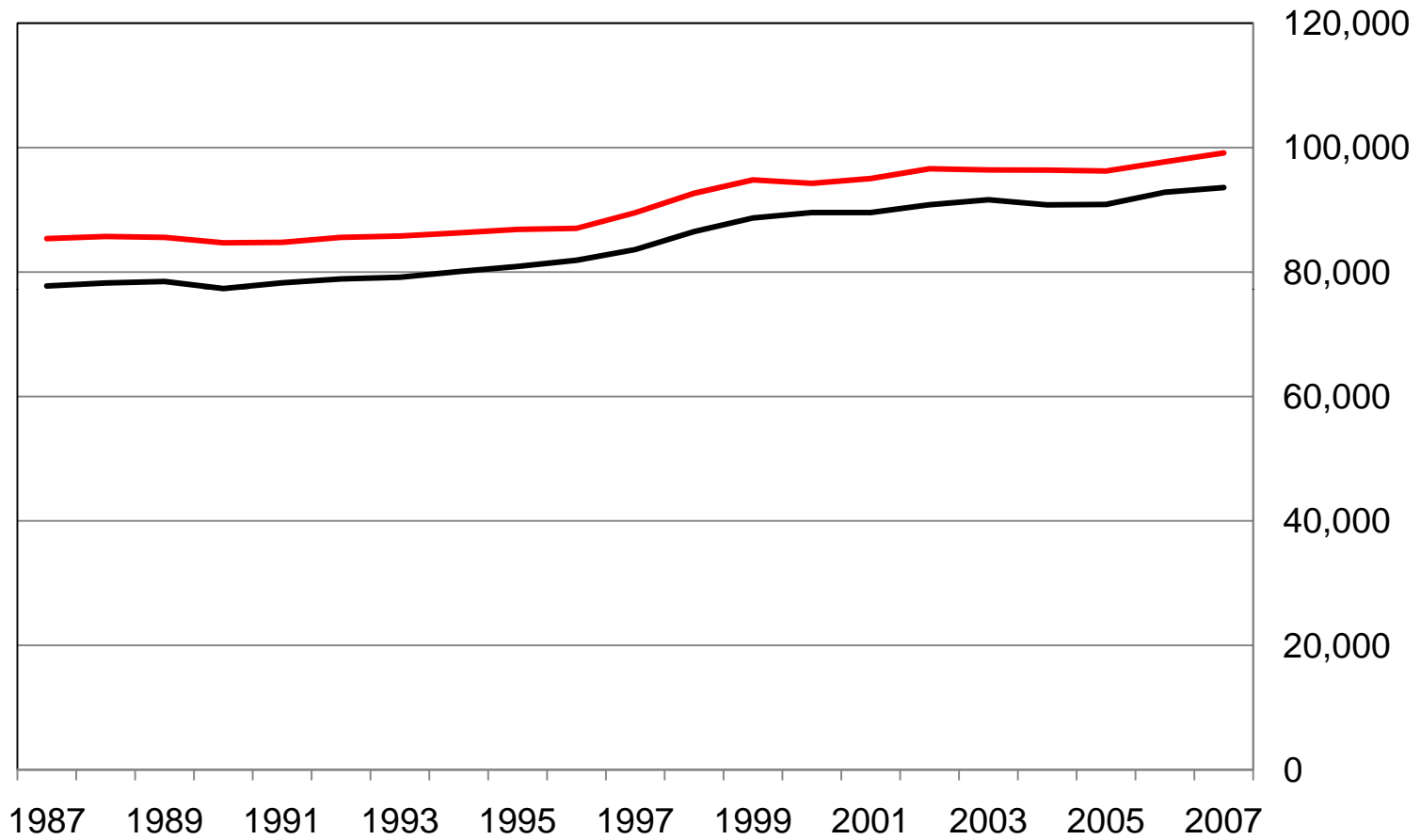
Note: Data on earnings of full-time, year-round workers are not readily available before 1960. For information on recessions, see Appendix A.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1961 to 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

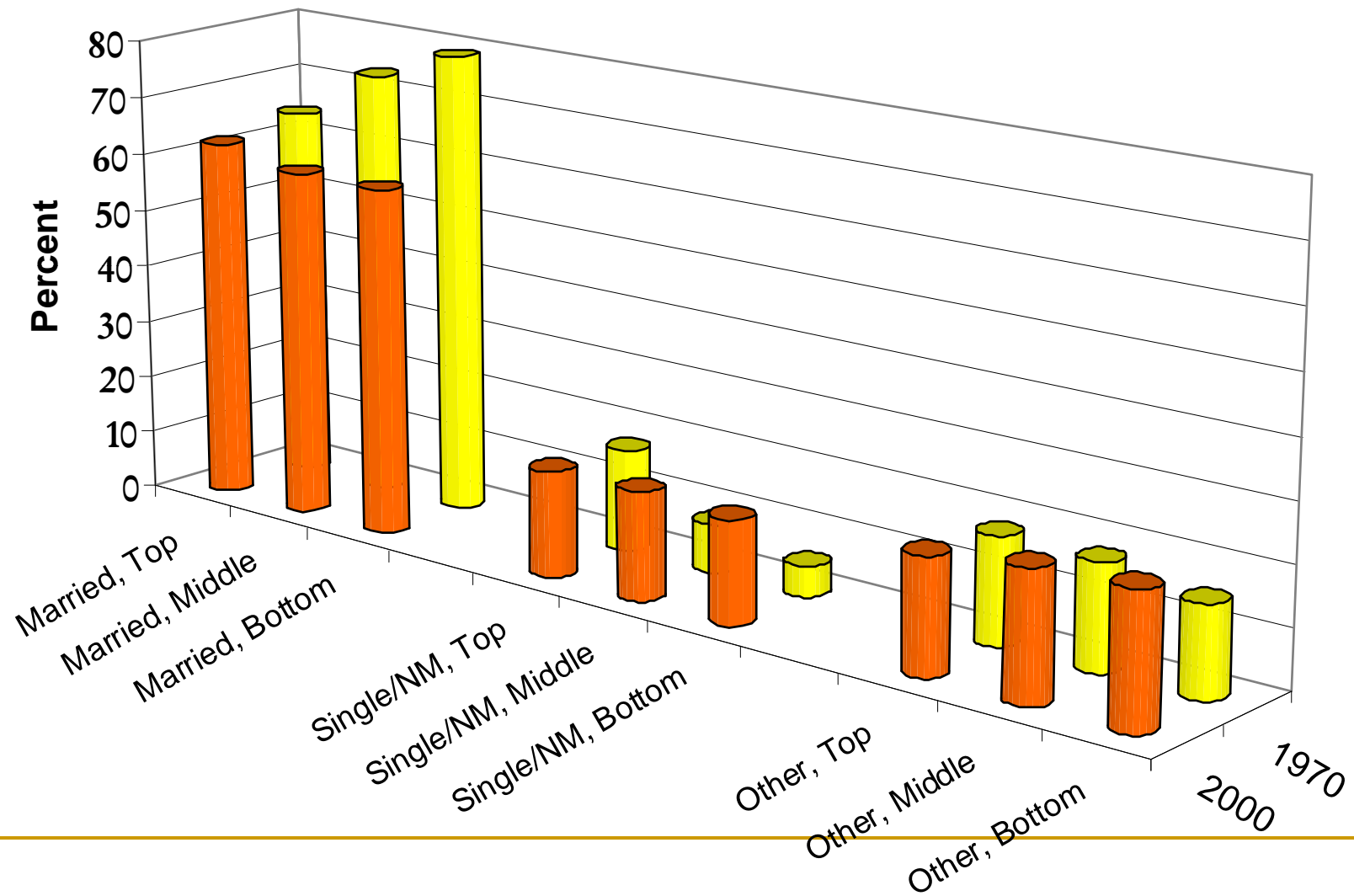
## Number of Married Couples (Census Bureau)



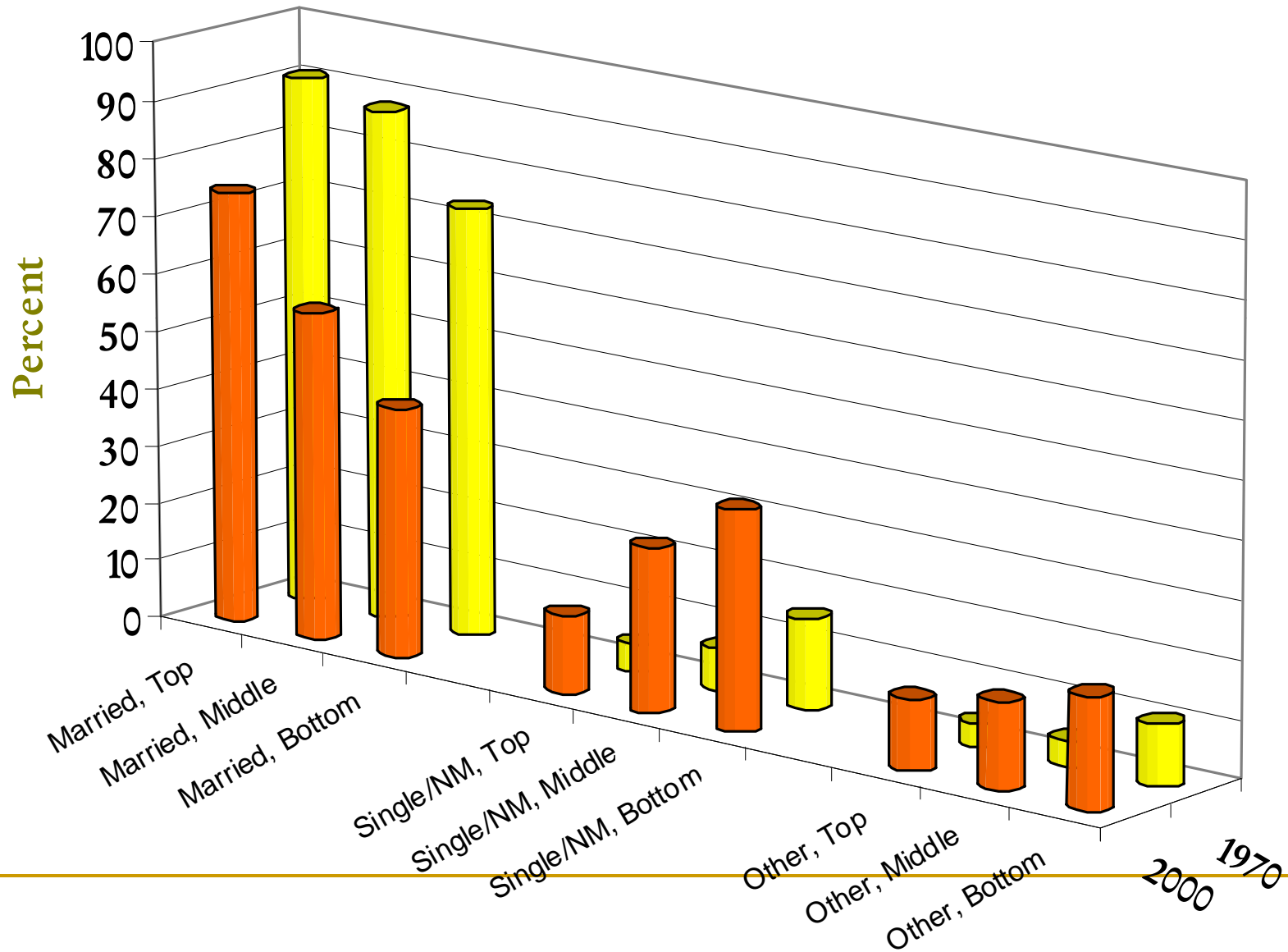
## Median Income of Married Couples (Census Bureau)



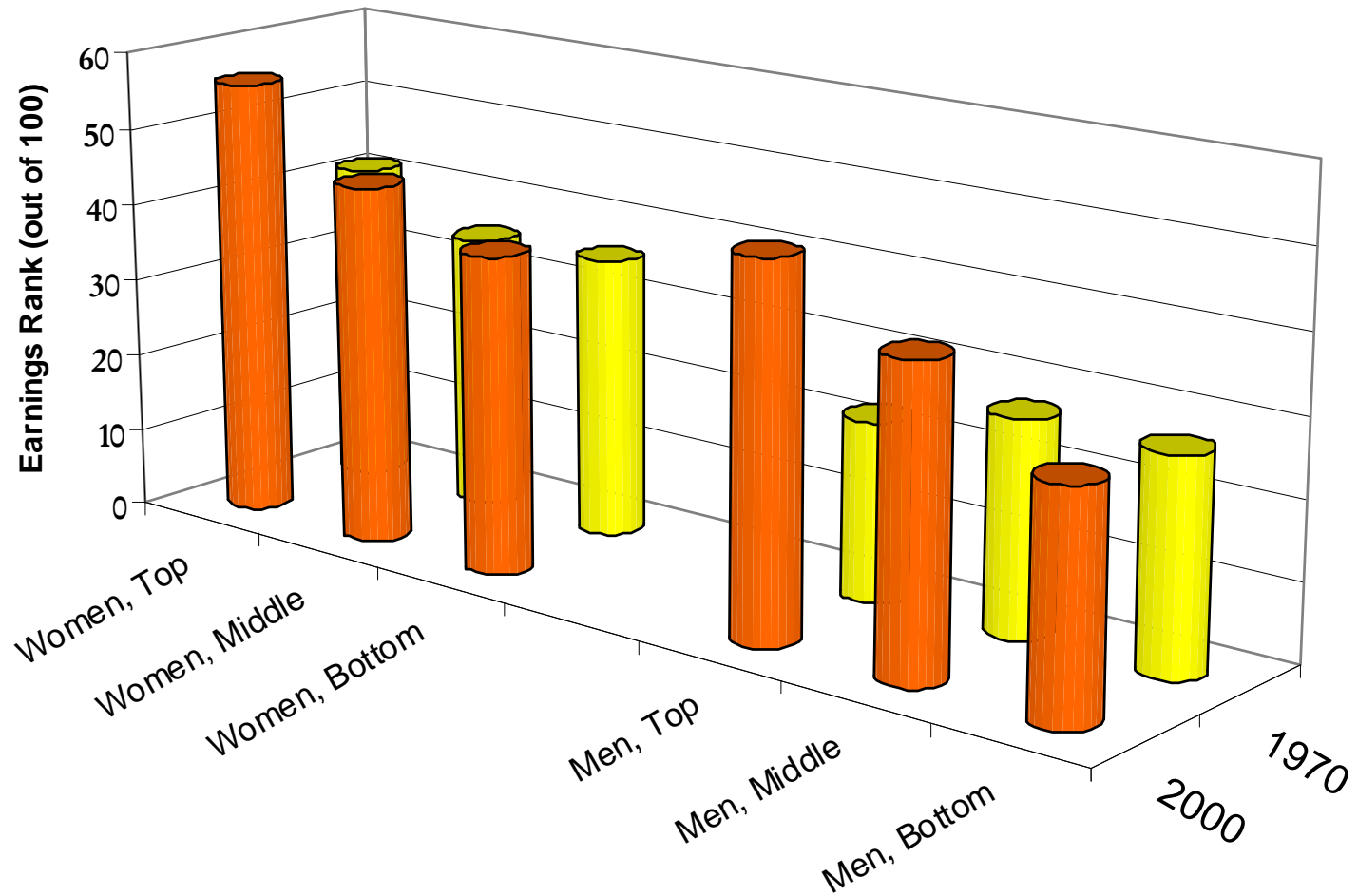
## Family Characteristics of Women in the Top, Middle and Bottom



# Family Characteristics of Men in the Top, Middle and Bottom



## Average Earnings Rank of Spouses in the Top, Middle and Bottom



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## Summary and Implications for Low Wage Work

- First business cycle recovery without an increase in median household income.
  - First business cycle recovery with stagnant median earnings for women (except for late 1970s).
  - First business cycle recovery of past three decades without significant increase in work hours by wives.
  - Increasing tendency for family dynamics to favor the top tenth of earners, among both men and women (also among blacks and whites): marriage declined the least and the earnings rank of spouses increased the most.
  - **Implication for low wage work:** families will be increasingly unable to make up for stagnant and declining earnings through increasing the labor supply of women and other family members.
  - **Policies that improve earnings, benefits, and conditions for low wage workers will be all the more critical in the current environment, including those that facilitate work by parents.**
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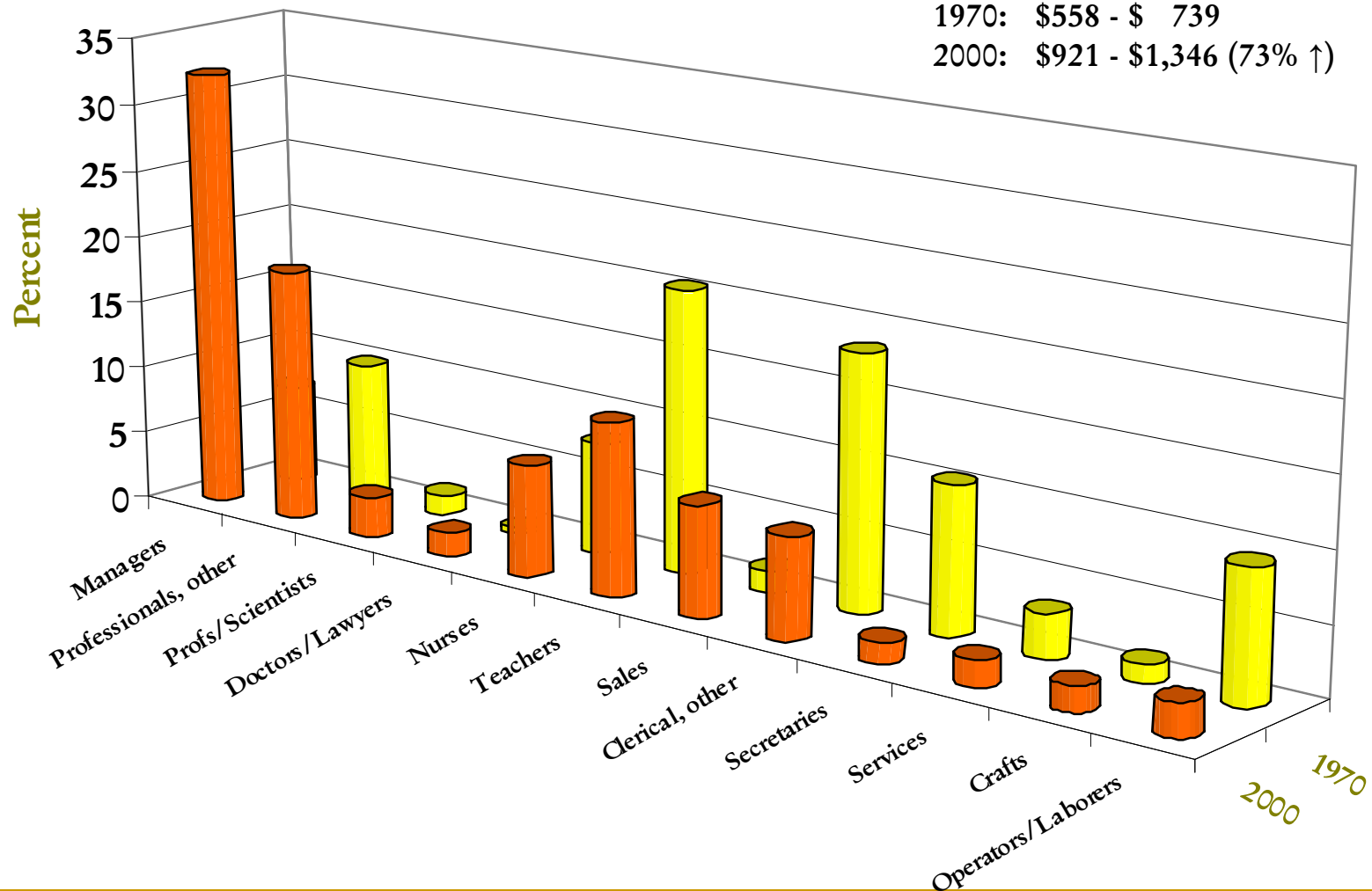


## Occupational Distribution of Women in the Top 10 Percent

### EARNINGS RANGE

1970: \$558 - \$ 739

2000: \$921 - \$1,346 (73% ↑)

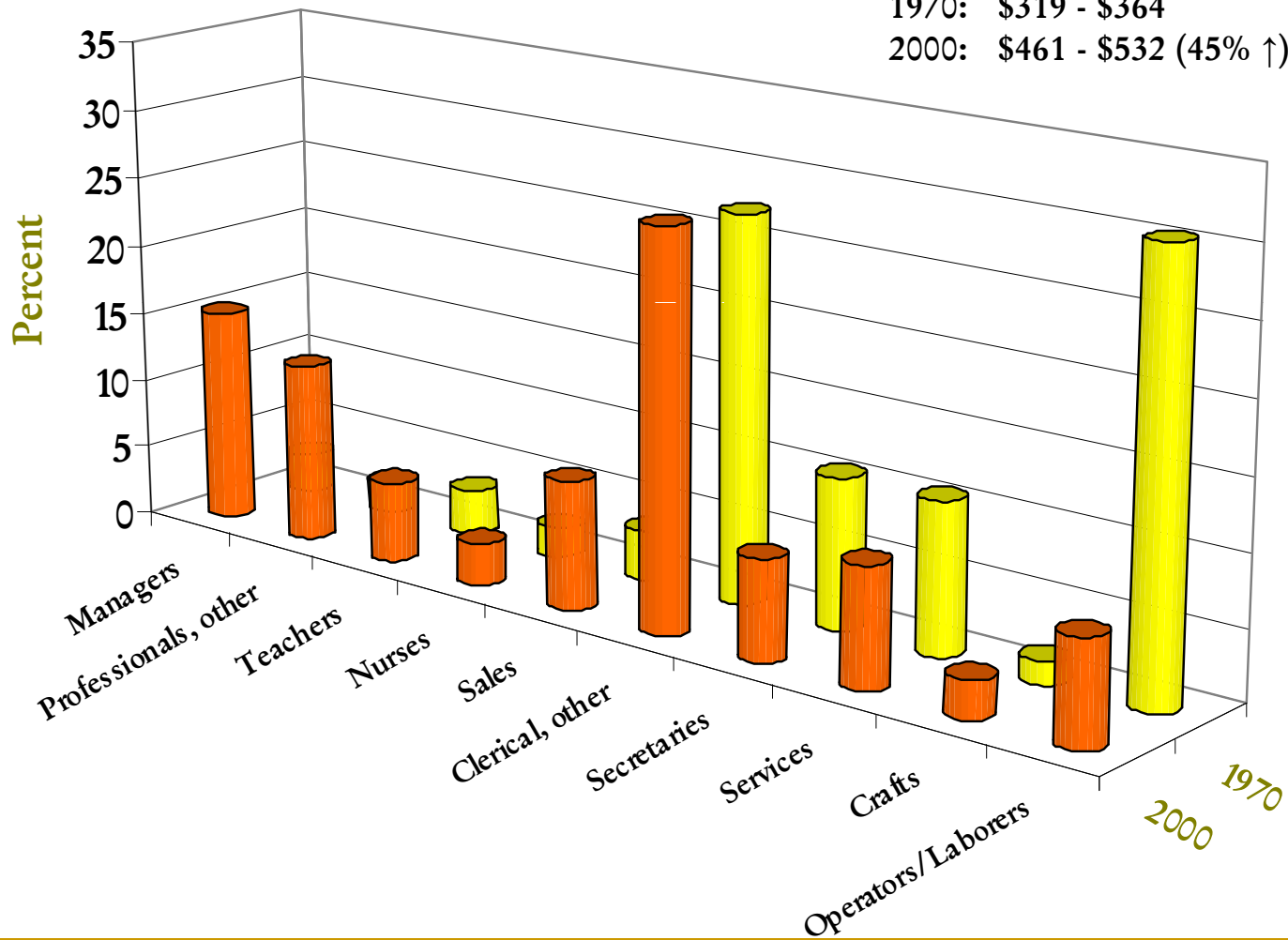


## Occupational Distribution of Women in the Middle 10 Percent

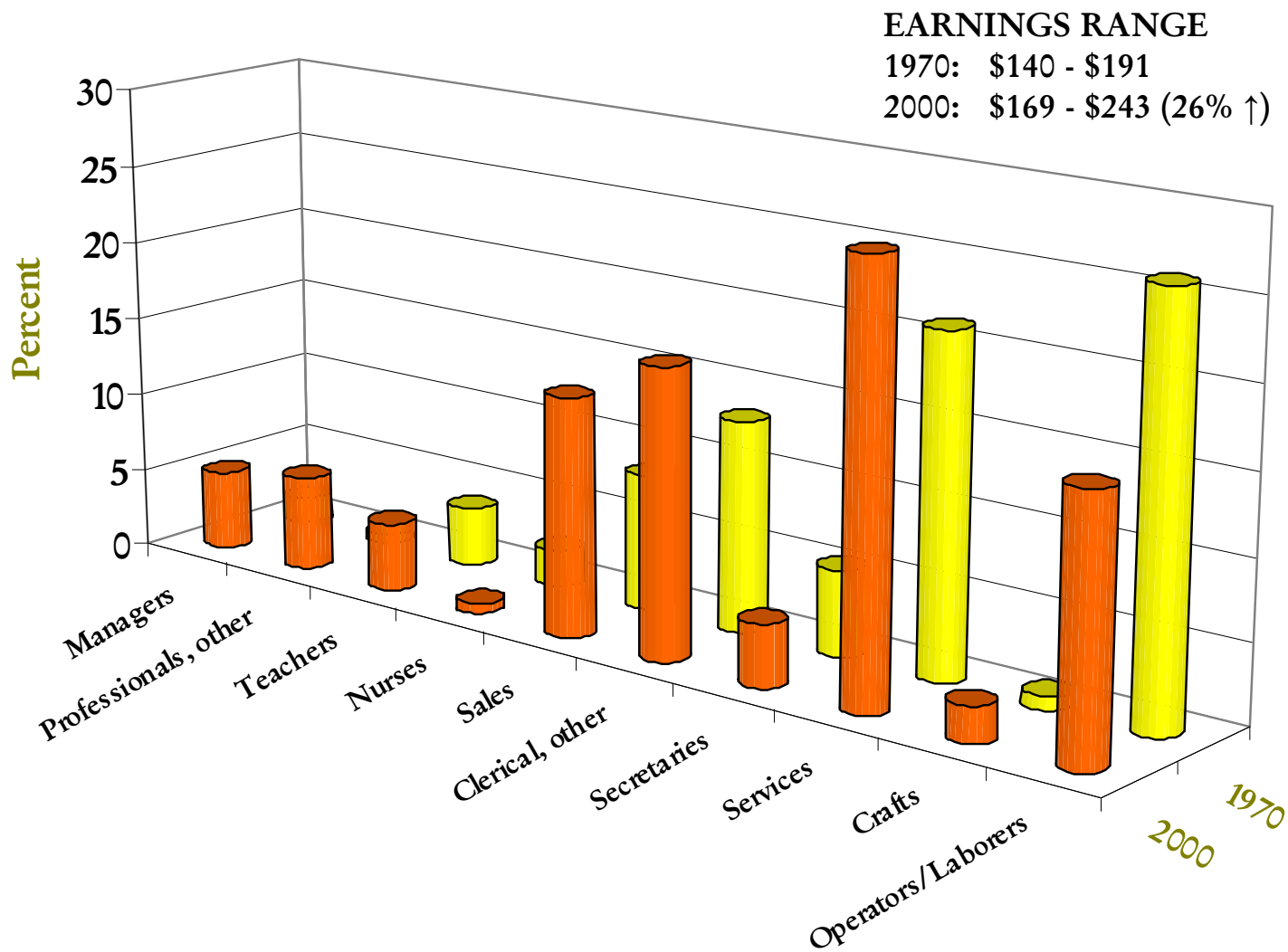
### EARNINGS RANGE

1970: \$319 - \$364

2000: \$461 - \$532 (45% ↑)

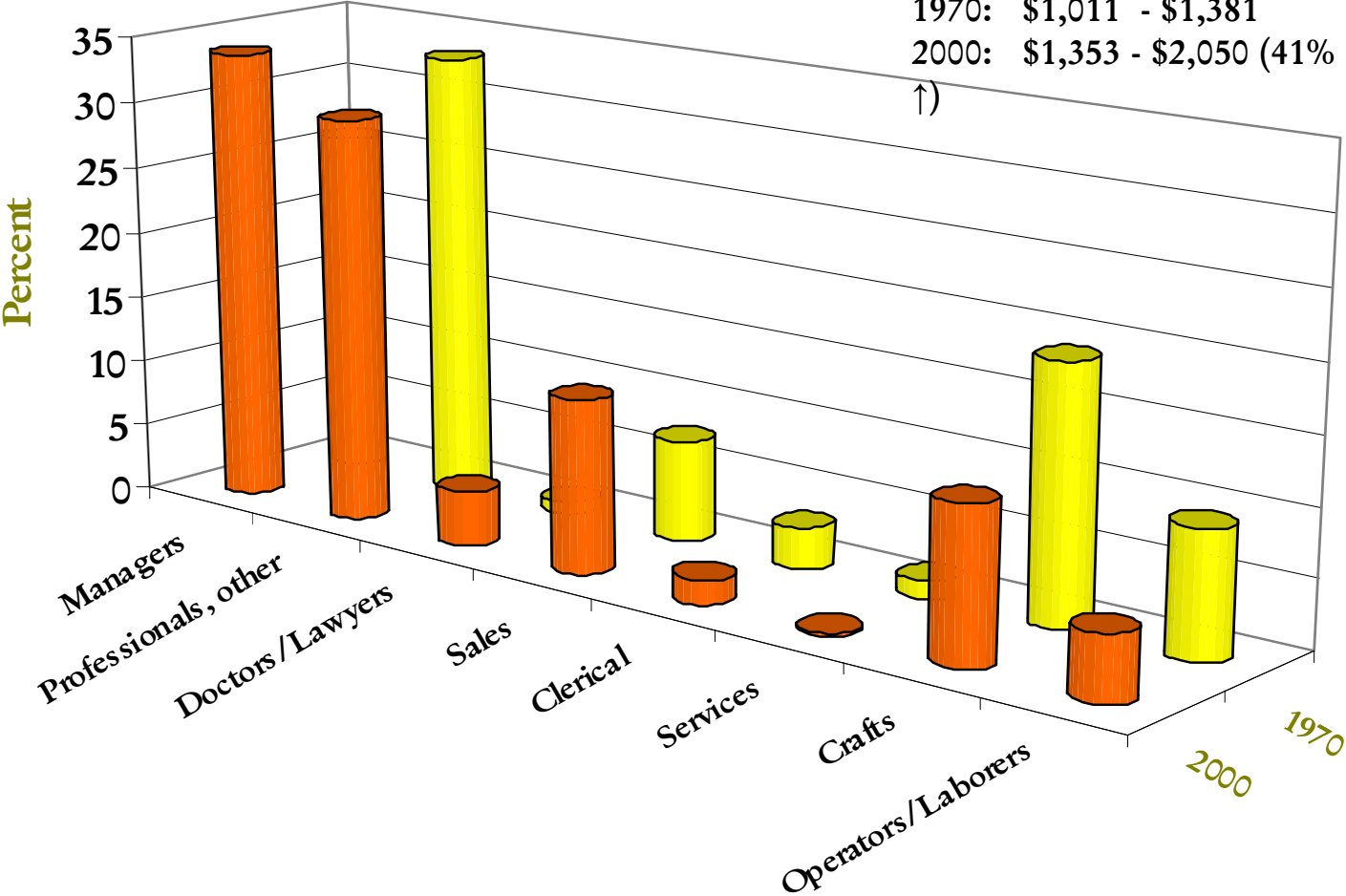


## Occupational Distribution of Women in the Bottom 10 Percent

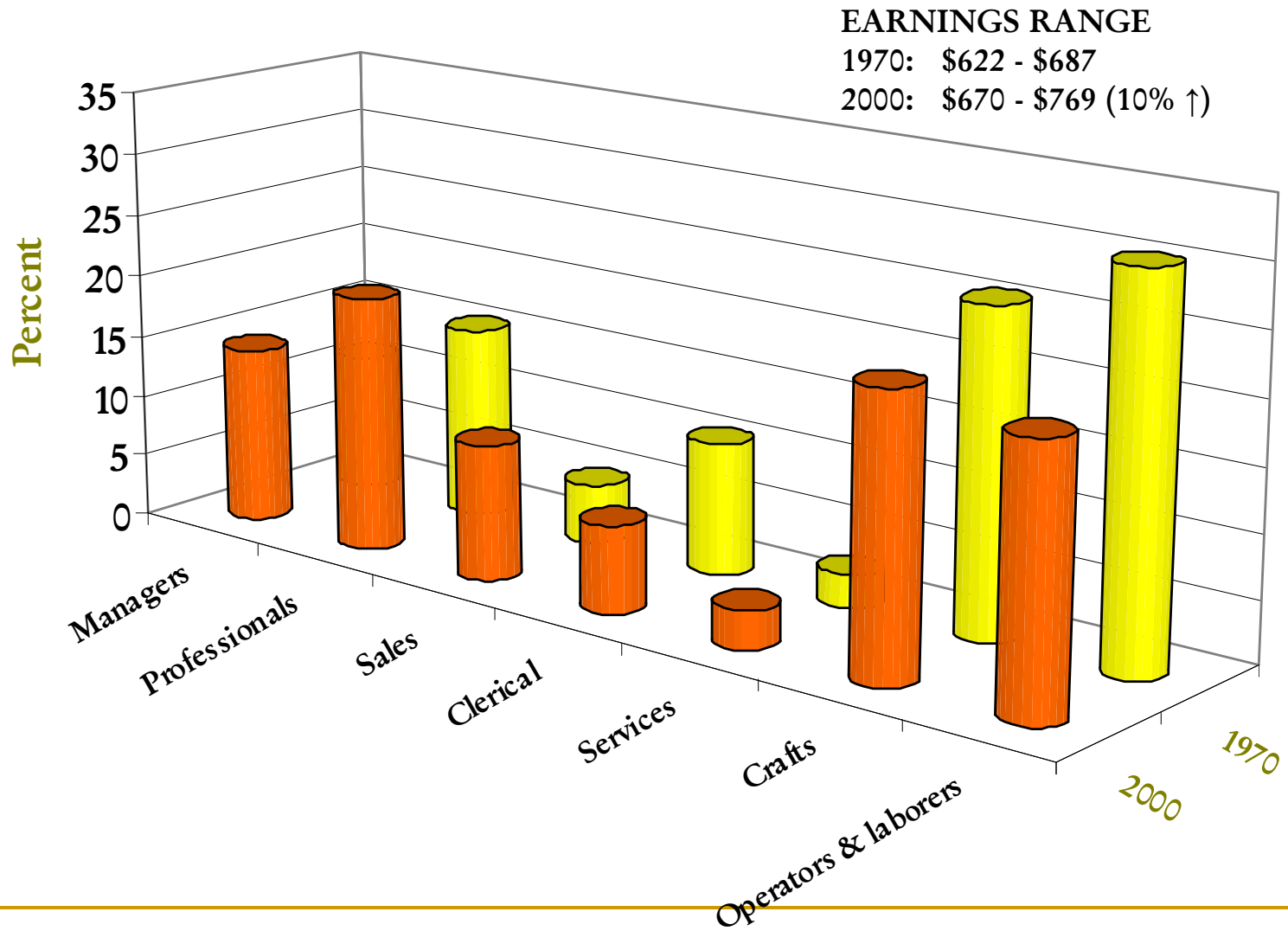


# Occupational Distribution of Men in the Top 10 Percent

**EARNINGS RANGE**  
 1970: \$1,011 - \$1,381  
 2000: \$1,353 - \$2,050 (41% ↑)



## Occupational Distribution of Men in the Middle 10 Percent



## Occupational Distribution of Men in the Bottom 10 Percent

### EARNINGS RANGE

1970: \$277 - \$401

2000: \$240 - \$365 (12% ↓)

