Wage inequality is a social issue that is taken place

A map of the united states

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When examining wage differences across the U.S., both the East and West coasts tend to report significantly higher average wages than states in the middle of the country. The gap between the highest and lowest average mean wages exceeds $30,000, highlighting regional disparities. While the District of Columbia has the highest average, it was excluded from the map for clarity and is instead represented in a neutral color.

A graph of a number of people

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We look to see if there are any difference between the mean and median of the occupation “All Occupations” to better understand disparities within states. We sorted and graphed the states with the largest and Smallest gaps and found California, New York, and DC to be the three states with a large disparity signaling the presence of very high earners that are skewing the average. These states often deal with technology, finance, and government positions.

In contrast, we see South Dakota, Iowa, and Mississippi, whom have a lower wage, having much less disparity, although still having some. This variation confirms that **mean wage is more sensitive to inequality**, and that income distributions vary structurally by state.

A graph of a chart

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A graph of various occupations

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A graph of various occupations

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For the most common jobs, we observe broad, service-oriented occupations such as office support, transportation, and business operations. Administrative support roles show a significant gap in employment compared to the second most common category, highlighting their critical role in the U.S. workforce.

In contrast, the least common jobs include highly specialized or niche occupations such as oral surgeons, private cooks, and model makers. Due to the extensive education, training, or specialization required, these roles are rare and often associated with higher wages despite their small employment numbers.

A graph of green bars with white text

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The top-paying occupations in the U.S. include Chief Executives, Athletes, and several specialized healthcare roles such as physicians and nurse anesthetists. None of these jobs appeared on the list of rare occupations, suggesting that while these roles are highly paid, they are not necessarily scarce at the national level.

A graph with blue lines

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The lowest-paying occupations are heavily concentrated in the food service and recreational sectors, including roles such as dishwashers, cashiers, ushers, and fast-food workers. These jobs typically require lower formal education and are often part-time or seasonal in nature, contributing to their lower average wages.

A graph of a number of people in the united states

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A graph showing a number of jobs

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High-wage states like California, New York, and D.C. host a disproportionate share of both the highest-paid. Over one-third of all U.S. Chief Executives are located in these states — but so are large shares of fast food cooks, dishwashers, and cashiers.

This contrast reinforces earlier findings: while high earners raise the average wage, the presence of low-wage jobs keeps the median lower, revealing the high income inequality within these states.