

Gender Pay Gap Fact Sheet – February 2024

The gender wage gap is a measure of just how far our nation must still go to ensure that women can participate fully and equally in our economy. In 2023 women working a full-time year-round job earn 84 cents to the \$1 that white, non-Hispanic men earn resulting in a pay gap of 16% (AAUW)

In **IOWA**, women are paid 78 cents for each dollar men earn, resulting in a wage gap of 22 cents. (AAUW)

WHAT DOES THE WAGE GAP MEAN FOR AMERICA’S WOMEN? If the annual gender wage gap were eliminated, on average, a working woman in the United States would have enough money for:

- Nearly 13 additional months of childcare. (Child Care Aware of America, 2022)
- More than one year of tuition and fees for a four-year public university, or the full cost of tuition and fees for a two-year college. (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2022)
- Seven additional months of premiums for employer-based health insurance. (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2022)
- Nearly 64 weeks of food (more than one year’s worth). (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021)
- Almost seven more months of mortgage and utilities payments. (US Census Bureau, 2021)
- Nearly nine months of rent. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021)
- Or enough money to pay off student loan debt in just over three years. (US Department of Education, 2022)

Women, Families and the Country Cannot Afford Discrimination and Lower Wages.

- In the United States, mothers are breadwinners in 40 percent of families with children under 18 each year – and about 70 percent will be the primary earner at some point in their first 18 years of motherhood.
- Forty-eight percent of white mothers, 49 percent of Latina mothers, 79 percent of Black mothers, 64 percent of Native American mothers and 43 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander mothers are breadwinners in their households. Yet the wage gap for mothers is larger than for women overall.
- Nearly 35 million households in the United States are headed by women, more than six million of them with children under 18. More than 8.4 million households—including 2 million with children—have incomes that fall below the poverty level.

The Wage Gap Cannot Be Explained by Choices.

- The wage gap persists regardless of industry.
- The wage gap is present within occupations.
- The wage gap exists regardless of education level.
- **Numerous causes contribute to the wage gap, including discrimination and bias.** Compared to men, women tend to hold lower-paying jobs, work in lower-paying industries, and spend less time in the formal workforce. These trends result from factors ranging from pervasive stereotypes and social norms about gender and work, to a lack of workplace support for family caregiving, to gender and racial discrimination, to the devaluation of work when it is primarily done by women – and the effects are both starker and qualitatively different for women of color.

- **Women consider equal pay a top issue.** Ahead of the 2022 midterm elections, three-quarters of women voters (76 percent) said that strengthening equal pay laws is either “very important” or “one of the most important things Congress can do.”
- **Less than one-third of women believe they are paid fairly.** Just 30 percent of U.S. women in the workforce say they are very sure their employer pays men and women equally for the same work. Nearly 6 in 10 women (58%) say they have faced gender or racial discrimination or barriers to a better job.
- **Women want Congress to enact policies that would help close the wage gap.** Nearly nine in ten women voters (87 percent) support paid family and medical leave for all workers. More than eight in ten (84 percent) support ensuring access to high-quality, affordable childcare. Eight in ten (82 percent) support increasing wages for tipped workers, and nearly eight in ten (78 percent) raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour.

A Path Toward Closing the Wage Gap

- **Fair pay protections and practices.** The Paycheck Fairness Act would prohibit employers from retaliating against employees who discuss their wages and make it easier to demonstrate that discrimination has occurred. It would also prohibit screening of job applicants based on their salary histories. The Fair Pay Act would diminish wage disparities that result from gender-based occupational segregation.
- **A higher minimum wage and elimination of the tipped minimum wage.** The Raise the Wage Act would increase the federal minimum wage to \$17 an hour by 2028 and gradually eliminate the subminimum wage for tipped workers and workers with disabilities.
- **Stronger protections against and remedies for workplace harassment.** The Ending the Monopoly of Power Over Workplace Harassment through Education and Reporting (EMPOWER) Act would address certain issues related to workplace harassment.
- **Family friendly workplace standards.** The Healthy Families Act would allow workers to earn job-protected paid or unpaid sick days. The FAMILY Act would create a national paid family and medical leave program ensuring that all workers could address serious health and caregiving needs. Both proposals would help keep women attached to the workforce resulting in higher wages over time... which is also essential for retention & advancement for women in workforce.
- **Stronger protections for workers' right to organize.** Unions have been proven to provide women with higher wages and better benefits and to close gender and racial wage gaps.
- **Full funding for federal agencies that investigate and enforce fair pay.** The Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, as well as executive branch initiatives to collect pay information and promote fair pay, are critically important to uncovering and eliminating discriminatory workplace practices that harm women.
- **Comprehensive reproductive health care.** Access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion care and contraceptives, allows women to plan out and control their lives, enabling them to pursue education and career opportunities, and can increase workforce attachment and wages over time.

Information presented here is from **America's Women and the Wage Gap, September 2023** *unless otherwise noted*. The complete document is available from the **National Partnership for Women and Families**.