

# Rhode Island Women and the Wage Gap

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In Rhode Island, median annual pay for a woman who holds a full-time, year-round job is \$43,541 while median annual pay for a man who holds a full-time, year-round job is \$53,400. **This means that women in Rhode Island are paid 82 cents for every dollar paid to men, amounting to an annual wage gap of \$9,859.<sup>1</sup>**

The wage gap can be even larger for women of color. **Among Rhode Island women who hold full-time, year-round jobs, Black women are paid 59 cents and Latinas are paid 50 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>2</sup>**

Rhode Island's gender wage gap spans the state. **In both of Rhode Island's congressional districts, the median yearly pay for women who work full time, year-round is less than the median yearly pay for men who do.<sup>3</sup>**

## What Does the Wage Gap Mean for Rhode Island's Women?

On average, Rhode Island women who are employed full time lose a combined total of **more than \$2.8 billion every year** due to the wage gap.<sup>4</sup> These lost wages mean women and their families have less money to support themselves, save and invest for the future, and spend on goods and services. Families, businesses and the economy suffer as a result.

**If the annual wage gap were eliminated, on average, a working woman in Rhode Island would have enough money for:**

- ▶ Nearly one more year of child care;<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ Nearly one year of tuition and fees at a four-year public university, or the full cost of tuition and fees at a two-year community college;<sup>6</sup>
- ▶ Approximately 72 more weeks of food for her family (1.4 year's worth);<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ Nearly six more months of mortgage and utilities payments;<sup>8</sup> or
- ▶ More than 10 additional months of rent.<sup>9</sup>

## Rhode Island Women and Families Cannot Afford Discrimination and Lower Wages

- ▶ In the United States, mothers are breadwinners in half of families with children under 18, including half of white mothers, 53 percent of Latina mothers, 81 percent of

Black mothers and 44 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander mothers.<sup>10</sup> Yet the wage gap for mothers is larger than for women overall. In Rhode Island, mothers with full-time, year-round jobs are paid 75 cents for every dollar paid to fathers.<sup>11</sup>

- ▶ **In Rhode Island, nearly 57,000 family households are headed by women.<sup>12</sup> About 24 percent of those families, or 13,800 family households, have incomes that fall below the poverty level.<sup>13</sup>** Eliminating the wage gap would provide much-needed income to women whose wages sustain their households.

## Nationally, the Wage Gap Cannot Be Explained By Choices

- ▶ **The wage gap persists regardless of industry.** In the civilian industries that employ the most full-time employees – health care and social assistance, manufacturing, retail trade and educational services – women are paid less than men. In the health care and social assistance industry, women are paid just 72 cents for every dollar paid to men. In manufacturing, just 77 cents. In retail trade, 79 cents. And in educational services, 87 cents. Across all industries, women are typically paid lower salaries than men.<sup>14</sup>
- ▶ **The wage gap is present within occupations.** Among the occupations with the most people working full time, year-round – sales, production, management, and office and administrative support – women are paid less than men. In sales, women are paid just 62 cents for every dollar paid to men. In production, just 70 cents. In management, 77 cents. And in office and administrative support occupations, 88 cents.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ **The wage gap exists regardless of education level.** Women with master’s degrees working full time, year-round are paid just 73 cents for every dollar paid to men with master’s degrees. Further, among full-time, year-round workers, women with doctoral degrees are paid less than men with master’s degrees, and women with master’s degrees are paid less than men with bachelor’s degrees.<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ **Discrimination and bias still contribute to the wage gap.** Statistical analysis shows that 62 percent of the wage gap can be attributed to occupational and industry differences; differences in experience and education; and factors such as race, region and unionization. That leaves 38 percent of the gap unaccounted for, leading researchers to conclude that factors such as discrimination and unconscious bias continue to affect women’s wages.<sup>17</sup>

## America’s Women Are Concerned About Unfair Pay

- ▶ **Women consider equal pay a top workplace issue.** Nearly six in 10 women (58 percent) in the United States identify equal pay as one of the most important issues facing women in the workplace. When compared to women in most other leading, high-wealth countries, a substantially higher share of U.S. women list equal pay as one of the most important issues women face at work.<sup>18</sup>
- ▶ **Less than one-third of women believe they are paid fairly.** Just 28 percent of U.S. working women say they are confident they are paid the same salaries as their male counterparts. Forty-three percent say they do not believe they are paid the same – a substantially higher share than in most other leading, high-wealth countries.<sup>19</sup>

- ▶ **Women are more likely to support a candidate for office who supports pay equity.** Seventy percent of Republican women, 83 percent of independent women and 88 percent of Democratic women say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports equal pay for women.<sup>20</sup>

## A Path Toward Closing the Wage Gap

Despite the federal Equal Pay Act of 1963 and other federal and state workplace protections for women, experts warn that women and men will not reach pay parity until 2059<sup>21</sup> – unless something changes. Fortunately, there are policies that would help, including: **protections that help identify and challenge discriminatory pay and employment practices and address gender-based occupational segregation; minimum wage increases; family friendly workplace supports like paid family and medical leave and paid sick days; affordable child care; and access to comprehensive reproductive health care.**

Several states and localities have taken steps to advance these policies, and federal proposals are before Congress. Together, these policies create a path toward closing the gap between the wages of women and men by helping to ensure that women have access to good and decent-paying jobs, the support they need to stay and advance in their careers, and fair and nondiscriminatory treatment wherever they work and in whatever jobs they hold.

**Learn more about fair pay at [NationalPartnership.org/Gap](https://nationalpartnership.org/gap).**

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1 U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2016, Geographies: All States within United States and Puerto Rico, Table B20017: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2016 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months*. Retrieved 2 March 2018, from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_16\\_1YR\\_B20017&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_1YR_B20017&prodType=table)

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7 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016, August). *Consumer Expenditure Survey, Table 1800. Region of residence: Annual expenditure means, shares, standard errors, and coefficient of variation, 2016*. Retrieved 2 March 2018, from <https://www.bls.gov/cex/2016/combined/region.pdf> (Calculation uses overall average “food” cost for the region in which the state is located)

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The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at [NationalPartnership.org](http://NationalPartnership.org).

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