North Carolina Women and the Wage Gap

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In North Carolina, median annual pay for a woman who holds a full-time, year-round job is $35,481 while median annual pay for a man who holds a full-time, year-round job is $41,857. This means that women in North Carolina are paid 85 cents for every dollar paid to men, amounting to an annual wage gap of $6,376.1

The wage gap can be larger for women of color. Among North Carolina’s women who hold full-time, year-round jobs, African American women are paid 64 cents, Latinas are paid 48 cents and Asian women are paid 78 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.2

North Carolina’s gender wage gap spans the state. In all 13 of North Carolina’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.3

What Does the Gap Mean for North Carolina’s Women?

On average, North Carolina women who are employed full time lose a combined total of nearly nine billion dollars every year due to the wage gap.4 These women, their families, businesses and the economy suffer as a result. Lost wages mean families have less money to save for the future or to spend on basic goods and services – spending that helps drive the economy.

If the annual wage gap were eliminated, on average, a working woman in North Carolina would have enough money for approximately:

- 52 more weeks of food for her family (one year’s worth);5
- Five more months of mortgage and utilities payments;6 or
- Nearly eight more months of rent.7

North Carolina Women and Families Cannot Afford Discrimination and Lower Wages

- In the United States, mothers are primary or sole breadwinners in nearly 40 percent of families.8 Yet the wage gap for mothers is larger than for women overall. According to 2013 data, mothers employed full time, year round are paid 71 cents for every dollar paid to fathers. It is worse for single mothers with full-time, year-round jobs, who are paid just 58 cents for every dollar paid to fathers.9
In North Carolina, nearly 517,000 family households are headed by women.\(^{10}\) About 34 percent of those families, or 173,104 family households, have incomes that fall below the poverty level.\(^{11}\) 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 71 cents for every dollar paid to men. In manufacturing, just 75 cents. In retail trade, 78 cents. And in educational services, 87 cents. Across all industries, women are paid lower salaries than men.\(^{12}\)

- **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 66 cents. In management, 80 cents. And in office and administrative support occupations, just 87 cents.\(^{13}\)

- **The wage gap exists regardless of education level.** Women with master’s degrees working full time, year round are paid just 72 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.\(^{14}\)

- **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.\(^{15}\)

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.\(^{16}\)

- **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.\(^{17}\)

- **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.\(^{18}\)
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\(^1\) – unless something changes. Fortunately, there are policies that would help, including: protections that enable women to identify and challenge discriminatory pay and employment practices; 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 across the country 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.

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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.

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