Iowa Women and the Wage Gap

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In Iowa, median annual pay for a woman who holds a full-time, year-round job is $36,264 while median annual pay for a man who holds a full-time, year-round job is $47,298. This means that women in Iowa are paid 77 cents for every dollar paid to men, amounting to an annual wage gap of $11,034.1

The wage gap can be even larger for women of color. Among Iowa women who hold full-time, year-round jobs, Black women are paid 61 cents, Latinas are paid 57 cents and Asian women are paid 67 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.2

Iowa’s gender wage gap spans the state. In all four of Iowa’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 Wage Gap Mean for Iowa’s Women?

On average, Iowa women who are employed full time lose a combined total of more than $8.5 billion every year due to the wage gap.4 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 Iowa would have enough money for:

- Nearly 16 more months of child care;5
- 1.3 additional years of tuition and fees for a four-year public university, or the full cost of tuition and fees at a two-year community college;6
- Approximately 81 more weeks of food for her family (1.6 years’ worth);7
- More than nine additional months of mortgage and utilities payments;8 or
- More than 15 additional months of rent.9

Iowa 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. Yet the wage gap for mothers is larger than for women overall. Mothers with full-time, year-round jobs are paid 71 cents for every dollar paid to fathers.

In Iowa, more than 115,000 family households are headed by women. About 28 percent of those families, or 32,489 family households, have incomes that fall below the poverty level. 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 76 cents. In retail trade, 79 cents. And in educational services, 87 cents. Across all industries, women are paid lower salaries than men.

- **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 63 cents for every dollar paid to men. In production, just 72 cents. In management, 80 cents. And in office and administrative support occupations, 87 cents.

- **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.

- **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.

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.

- **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.
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.20

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 205921 – 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.

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12 U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2015, Table DP02: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States. Retrieved 21 March 2017, from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_DP02&prodType=table (Calculation uses family households headed by females living in a household with family and no husband; a family household includes a householder, one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder, and anyone else living in the same household)

13 U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2015, Geographies: United States, Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics. Retrieved 21 March 2017, from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_1YR_DP03&prodType=table (To determine whether a household falls below the poverty level, the U.S. Census Bureau considers the income of the householder, size of family, number of related children, and, for one- and two-person families, age of householder. The poverty threshold in 2015 was $19,096 for a single householder and two children under 18)


18 Thomson Reuters Foundation. (2015). The 5 key issues facing women working in the G20. Retrieved 21 March 2017, from http://www.womenatworkpoll.com (Ipsos Global @Adviser conducted an international survey among 9,501 women across 19 countries. Surveys were conducted from July 24 – August 7, 2015. The margin of error between two country sample sizes of 500 is roughly 6 percent at the 95 percent confidence interval. Data are weighted to match the population profile of each country by age, region and household income.)

19 Ibid.


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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