

Asian American and Pacific Islander Women and the Wage Gap

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A persistent gender-based wage gap continues to harm women, their families and the economy – and it is particularly damaging for many Asian American and Pacific Islander women. Asian women in the United States who work full time, year-round are typically paid just 87 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.¹ However, the wage gap among Asian and Pacific Islander subgroups show that Asian women are not model minorities and different ethnicities continue to suffer from large gaps in wages.

Data for Asian and Pacific Islander women show gender and racial wage gaps persist.

- ▶ Among 20 select subgroups of Asian women working full time, year-round, pay ranges from 51 cents to 124 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.²
- ▶ Burmese, Samoan and Hmong women experience the largest wage gaps. Burmese women are paid 51 cents, Samoan women 56 cents and Hmong women 59 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.³
- ▶ Among the subgroups in which women are typically paid more than or the same as white, non-Hispanic men, women are still paid less than men within the same ethnicity. For example, of full-time, year-round workers, Indian women are paid 76 cents, Taiwanese women 72 cents, Sri Lankan women 86 cents, Chinese women 81 cents and Japanese women 76 cents for every dollar paid to men within their ethnicities.⁴
- ▶ The largest Asian ethnicities in the United States are Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese and Korean.⁵ Chinese and Indian women are typically paid more than white, non-Hispanic men, but Filipina, Vietnamese and Korean women are paid less. Filipina women are paid 85 cents, Vietnamese women only 62 cents and Korean women 91 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.⁶

Wage Gaps for Asian Women by Ethnicity					
An analysis of the wage gap among subgroups of Asian women compared to white, non-Hispanic and Asian men					
Ethnicity	Total Number in the United States	Median Wages for Women	Annual Wage Gap Compared to White, Non-Hispanic Men	Cents-on-the-Dollar Comparison to White, Non-Hispanic Men	Cents-on-the-Dollar Comparison to Asian Men's Wages (Within Subgroup)
Burmese	153,262	\$28,000	\$27,000	51	93
Samoan	119,605	\$31,000	\$24,000	56	72
Hmong	278,871	\$32,200	\$22,800	59	91

Laotian	205,131	\$33,000	\$22,000	60	83
Cambodian	259,554	\$34,000	\$21,000	62	85
Vietnamese	1,803,575	\$34,100	\$20,900	62	76
Hawaiian	178,874	\$34,500	\$20,500	63	78
Fijian	31,037	\$35,100	\$19,900	64	75
Guamanian/ Chamorro	82,398	\$36,000	\$19,000	65	80
Indonesian	76,516	\$37,000	\$18,000	67	71
Bangladeshi	175,592	\$46,000	\$9,000	84	115
Thai	202,744	\$46,000	\$9,000	84	128
Filipino	2,811,885	\$47,000	\$8,000	85	94
Pakistani	460,515	\$48,000	\$7,000	87	89
Korean	1,438,915	\$50,000	\$5,000	91	83
Japanese	789,830	\$55,000	\$0	100	76
Chinese	4,048,973	\$56,000	-\$1,000	102	81
Sri Lankan	52,006	\$60,000	-\$5,000	109	86
Taiwanese	165,883	\$65,000	-\$10,000	118	72
Indian	3,813,407	\$68,000	-\$13,000	124	76

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Geographies: All States within United States, Table B02015 Asian Alone by Selected Groups Universe: Total Asian alone population; Table B02016 Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone by Selected Groups Universe: Total Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone population*; Patrick, K., & Tucker, J. (2018, February). *Equal Pay for Asian and Pacific Islander Women*. National Women's Law Center Publication.

Note: The wage gap estimates use the 5-year estimate of earnings for white, non-Hispanic men, which is \$55,000 annually.

How Does the Wage Gap Harm Asian Women?

Median wages for Asian women in the United States are \$50,615 per year, compared to median wages of \$57,925 annually for white, non-Hispanic men. This amounts to a difference of \$7,310 each year.⁷ These lost wages mean Asian women and their families have less money to support themselves and their families, save and invest for the future, and spend on goods and services. Families, businesses and the economy suffer as a result.

For example, if the wage gap were eliminated, on average, an Asian woman working full time, year-round would have enough money for approximately:

- ▶ More than 10 additional months of child care;⁸
- ▶ Nearly one additional year of tuition and fees for a four-year public university, or the full cost of tuition and fees for a two-year community college;⁹

- ▶ More than 53 additional weeks of food – more than one year’s worth;¹⁰
- ▶ Nearly five more months of mortgage and utilities payments;¹¹ or
- ▶ More than seven additional months of rent.¹²

Asian Women at the Margins Are Hurt the Most

Eliminating the wage gap would provide much-needed income to Asian women whose wages sustain their households.

- ▶ Nearly 45 percent of Asian mothers bring in 40 percent or more of their families’ income, which means their households rely heavily on their wages to make ends meet and get ahead.¹³
- ▶ The poverty rate for Asians is 12 percent overall and many subgroups experience much higher rates. For example, 35 percent of Burmese people and nearly 30 percent of Hmong people live in poverty. Women in these families are already struggling and can’t afford unfair pay.¹⁴
- ▶ More than one in four Asians (26 percent) live in multigenerational households, compared to just 19 percent of white people. Bhutanese (53 percent), Cambodians (41 percent) and Laotians (38 percent) are particularly likely to live in multigenerational families, which means family incomes, including women’s wages, support more people.¹⁵

The Public Overwhelmingly Supports Fair Pay Policies

- ▶ **More than two-thirds of U.S. voters (68 percent) say they favor policies that would address women being paid less than men for the same work.** Both women (72 percent) and men (64 percent) say they are supportive.¹⁶
- ▶ **Nearly two-thirds of voters support the Paycheck Fairness Act.** In a 2014 nationwide survey, 62 percent of likely voters said they support the Paycheck Fairness Act, a federal proposal that would help combat wage discrimination. Support for the Paycheck Fairness Act crosses demographic and ideological lines, with 83 percent of Democrats, 58 percent of independents, and 44 percent of Republican voters saying they support the Paycheck Fairness Act.¹⁷

1 U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Table PINC-05: Work Experience in 2016 – People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2016, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Disability Status*. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.2016.html> (Unpublished calculation based on the median earnings for all women and men who worked full time, year-round in 2016; full time is defined as 35 hours a week or more)

2 Patrick, K., & Tucker, J. (2018, February). *Equal Pay for Asian and Pacific Islander Women*. National Women’s Law Center Publication. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Asian-Women-Equal-Pay-Feb-2018.pdf>

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2016, Geographies: All States within United States, Tables B02015 and B02016*. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?refresh=t#none>

6 See note 2.

7 See note 1.

8 Child Care Aware of America. (2017). *Parents and the High Cost of Child Care*. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from https://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017_CCA_High_Cost_Report_FINAL.pdf; Unpublished calculation of \$8,670 based on the average cost of center-based child care for a four-year-old.

This average is not representative of the mean and is an approximation calculated by weighting state child care cost averages by the number of programs by type reported by each state. It is not to be considered a "national average."

9 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2017, November). *Digest of Education Statistics (Table 330.10, Average undergraduate tuition and fees and room and board rates charged for full-time students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution: 1963-64 through 2016-17)*. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_330.10.asp (The average total annual cost of undergraduate tuition and required fees is \$8,804 for a four-year public college or university or \$3,156 for a two-year college.)

10 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017, August). *Consumer Expenditure Survey, Table 1800. Region of residence: Annual expenditure means, shares, standard errors, and coefficient of variation, 2016*. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from <https://www.bls.gov/cex/2016/combined/region.pdf> (Calculation uses overall average "food" cost.)

11 U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2016, Table GCT2511: Median Monthly Housing Costs for Owner-Occupied Housing Units with a Mortgage (Dollars)*. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_1YR_GCT2511.US01PR&prodType=table (Calculation uses median monthly housing costs for owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage)

12 U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2016, Table GCT2514: Median Monthly Housing Costs for Renter-Occupied Housing Units (Dollars)*. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_1YR_GCT2514.US01PR&prodType=table (Calculation uses median gross rent)

13 Anderson, J. (2016, September 8). *Breadwinner Mothers by Race/Ethnicity and State*. Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from <https://iwpr.org/publications/breadwinner-mothers-by-raceethnicity-and-state/>

14 López, G., Ruiz, N.G., & Patten, E. (2017, September 7). *Key facts about Asian Americans, a diverse and growing population*. Pew Research Center Publication. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/08/key-facts-about-asian-americans/>

15 Ibid.

16 Anzalone Liszt Grove Research and The Feldman Group, Inc. conducted a national survey among 1,000 likely 2014 voters. Interviews were conducted Jan. 24-29, 2014. The margin of error for the sample as a whole is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points at the 95-percent level of confidence. The survey also included an oversample of N=200 Latino likely voters. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher. Interviews for the oversample were conducted in both English and Spanish. Retrieved 15 March 2018, from <http://www.americanwomen.org/research/document/PUBLIC-RELEASE-AW-FEB-5-RELEASE.pdf>

17 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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