

Latina Women and the Wage Gap

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Conversations around the wage gap tend to over-focus on the numbers while ignoring the causes. But these numbers are more than facts and figures; they represent the tangible consequences of sexism and white supremacy in the United States and how our country systematically devalues women of color and their labor. While racism and sexism are often thought of as individual bias, history shows us that systemic discrimination in pay and exploitation of workers based on race, class, gender and immigration status can be traced all the way back to this country's horrific past of enslaving Africans and their descendants; colonial attempts to destroy Native communities; and immigration policies, from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924, to the Bracero program of the 1940s-1960s, to the Trump administration's Muslim bans and the humanitarian crisis on our Southern border.

Today this means that Latina women in the United States are typically paid just 54 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.¹ Even when looking just at people working full time, year-round, Latina women are still only paid 58 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men – but that figure does not count more than 5.5 million Latina women.² The wages of Latina women are driven down by a number of current factors including gender and racial discrimination, workplace harassment, job segregation and a lack of workplace policies that support family caregiving, which is still most often performed by women.³ Overall, women are typically paid 76 cents for every dollar paid to men.⁴

Even in states with large populations of Latina women in the workforce, rampant wage disparities persist, with potentially devastating consequences for Latinas and their families.

- In the 25 states with the largest numbers of Latina women working for pay, the cents-on-the-dollar wage gap for Latina women ranges from 39 in Connecticut to 69 cents in Massachusetts for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men in those states.⁵
- Latina women face the largest overall cents-on-the-dollar wage gaps in Connecticut (just 39 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men), Michigan and Tennessee (40 cents), and Maryland and Colorado (44 cents).⁶

- Of these 25 states, California and Texas have the largest populations of Latina women working. Latina women in California are paid 57 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men and Latina women in Texas are paid 50 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.⁷
- The states with the smallest cents-on-the-dollar gaps between Latina women and white, non-Hispanic men are Massachusetts (69 cents), Washington (64 cents), Virginia and Pennsylvania (62 cents), and Arizona (60 cents).⁸
- Even in the states with the highest median wages for Latinas – New York (\$33,288), Colorado (\$33,250) and Massachusetts (\$32,662) – wage gaps are still substantial.⁹

| The Wage Gap in the 25 States with the Largest Number of Latina Working Women | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|-----------------|---------------------|
| State | Number of Latina Women with Earnings | Median Wages for Latina Women | Median Wages for White, Non-Hispanic Men | Annual Wage Gap | Cents on the Dollar |
| California | 5,803,723 | \$31,096 | \$54,158 | \$23,062 | \$0.57 |
| Texas | 4,218,034 | \$27,714 | \$55,196 | \$27,482 | \$0.50 |
| Florida | 2,367,168 | \$31,115 | \$58,757 | \$27,642 | \$0.53 |
| New York | 1,523,426 | \$33,288 | \$65,217 | \$31,929 | \$0.51 |
| Illinois | 841,982 | \$31,682 | \$53,949 | \$22,267 | \$0.59 |
| Arizona | 817,537 | \$32,062 | \$53,739 | \$21,677 | \$0.60 |
| New Jersey | 757,690 | \$31,164 | \$68,367 | \$37,203 | \$0.46 |
| Colorado | 458,613 | \$33,250 | \$75,137 | \$41,887 | \$0.44 |
| New Mexico | 390,177 | \$29,464 | \$58,540 | \$29,076 | \$0.50 |
| Georgia | 384,086 | \$28,247 | \$53,509 | \$25,262 | \$0.53 |
| North Carolina | 375,696 | \$26,207 | \$52,719 | \$26,512 | \$0.50 |
| Pennsylvania | 374,341 | \$28,970 | \$47,050 | \$18,080 | \$0.62 |
| Washington | 355,596 | \$31,658 | \$49,546 | \$17,888 | \$0.64 |
| Massachusetts | 335,813 | \$32,662 | \$47,505 | \$14,843 | \$0.69 |
| Nevada | 329,275 | \$31,587 | \$59,172 | \$27,585 | \$0.53 |
| Virginia | 322,890 | \$31,410 | \$50,676 | \$19,266 | \$0.62 |
| Maryland | 250,472 | \$31,744 | \$72,304 | \$40,560 | \$0.44 |
| Connecticut | 236,243 | \$29,359 | \$75,959 | \$46,600 | \$0.39 |
| Oregon | 204,095 | \$30,523 | \$61,020 | \$30,497 | \$0.50 |
| Michigan | 198,652 | \$28,097 | \$71,064 | \$42,967 | \$0.40 |
| Indiana | 187,271 | \$28,708 | \$53,206 | \$24,498 | \$0.54 |

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|-----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| Ohio | 180,139 | \$28,195 | \$53,967 | \$25,772 | \$0.52 |
| Utah | 169,545 | \$28,757 | \$49,350 | \$20,593 | \$0.58 |
| Tennessee | 154,277 | \$26,220 | \$65,396 | \$39,176 | \$0.40 |
| Oklahoma | 152,773 | \$24,784 | \$55,291 | \$30,507 | \$0.45 |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2025). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2019-2023 (Tables B20017I, B20017H, and B20005I).

How Does the Wage Gap Harm Latina Women?

Median wages for Latina women in the United States are \$36,150 per year, compared to median wages of \$66,850 annually for white, non-Hispanic men. This amounts to a difference of \$30,700 each year.¹⁰ These lost wages mean Latinas 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, a Latina working woman would have enough money for approximately:

- More than two years of child care;¹¹
- More than two and half additional years of tuition and fees for a four-year public university, or the full cost of tuition and fees for a two-year community college;¹²
- More than 17 additional months of premiums for employer-based health insurance;¹³
- About 37 more months of food for her family (over three years' worth);¹⁴
- More than a year of mortgage and utilities payments;¹⁵
- Almost 21 more months of rent;¹⁶
- The maximum annual individual 401(k) contribution;¹⁷ or
- Enough money to pay off the average student loan debt in just over a year.¹⁸

IF THE WAGE GAP CLOSED FOR ONE YEAR, LATINAS COULD AFFORD:



Latinas and Their Families Cannot Afford Discrimination and Lower Wages

- Eliminating the wage gap would provide much-needed income to Latina women whose wages sustain their households.
- Forty-five percent of Latina mothers are key breadwinners for their families, which means their households rely heavily on their wages to make ends meet and get ahead;¹⁹
- Nearly 3.8 million family households in the United States are headed by Latina women²⁰ – and 27 percent of those households live below the poverty level.²¹ This means that around one million family households headed by Latina women live in poverty, demonstrating the imperative to eliminate the wage gap.

The Public Overwhelmingly Supports Fair Pay Policies

- Latina women experience workplace harassment and discrimination at high rates. Over half of Latina women reported experiencing racial discrimination (52 percent) and gender discrimination (54 percent).²² Seventy-eight percent of Latina women voters surveyed ahead of the 2024 elections said ensuring workplaces are free from sexual violence, harassment and discrimination was a very important policy concern for them.²³
- Latina women want Congress to act. Three quarters (76 percent) of Latina women voters say strengthening equal pay laws is a very important policy concern. Latina women also believe it is very important to provide paid family and medical leave (71 percent), provide paid sick and safe leave to heal from illness or seek safety from gender-based violence (69 percent), and expand access to affordable, high-quality child care (71 percent).²⁴

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2025). *Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Table PINC-05: Work Experience in 2024 – People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2021, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Disability Status*. Retrieved 9 October 2025, from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html> (Unpublished calculation based on the median earnings for all Latina women and all white, non-Hispanic men with earnings in 2024.)

² Ibid. (Unpublished calculation based on the number of Latinas with any earnings and the number who worked at full-time jobs for 50 or more weeks per year in 2021.)

³ Glynn, S. J. (2018, April). *Gender wage inequality: What we know and how we can fix it*. Retrieved 25 November 2025, from Washington Center for Equitable Growth website: <https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/gender-wage-inequality/?longform=true>

⁴ See note 1.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2025). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2019-2023, Geographies: All States within United States, (Tables B20017I, B20017H, and B20005I)*. Retrieved 18 November 2025, from <http://data.census.gov>. (Calculations are based on a comparison of the median earnings of white, non-Hispanic men with those of Latina women.)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See note 1.

¹¹ Child Care Aware of America. (2025). *Child Care in America: 2024 Price & Supply*. Retrieved 14 October 2025, from <https://www.childcareaware.org/price-landscape24/#PriceofCare>. The authors note that the landscape of child care varies significantly from state to state and computing a single national average is complex. This analysis uses the national average for center-based care for a four-year-old, \$13,128.

¹² Ma, Jennifer, Matea Pender, and Meghan Oster (2024). *Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2024*, New York: College Board. Retrieved 14 October 2024, from <https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/Trends-in-College-Pricing-and-Student-Aid-2024-ADA.pdf>. (The average total annual cost of undergraduate tuition and required fees is \$11,610 for a four-year public college or university or \$4,050 for a two-year college)

¹³ U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (n.d.) *Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) Insurance Component (IC): Average total employee contributions per enrolled employee for single coverage at private-sector establishments that offer health insurance by firm size and selected characteristics, 2024*. Retrieved 25 September 2025, from <https://datatools.ahrq.gov/meps-ic/>

¹⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024, September 25). *Consumer Expenditures - 2023*. Retrieved 9 October 2025, from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cesan.pdf>. This analysis uses the overall average “food” expenditure which was \$9,985 in 2023.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2021, Table DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics*. Retrieved 25 September 2025, from <https://data.census.gov/> (Calculation uses median monthly owner costs, housing units with a mortgage. Monthly owner costs include the sum of payment for mortgages, real estate taxes, various insurances, utilities, fuels, mobile home costs, and condominium fees.)

¹⁶ Ibid. (Calculation uses median gross rent, occupied units paying rent)

¹⁷ U.S. Internal Revenue Service (2024, November 1). *401(k) limit increases to \$23,500 for 2025, IRA limit remains \$7,000*. Retrieved 15 October 2025, from <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/401k-limit-increases-to-23500-for-2025-ira-limit-remains-7000>

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid. (n.d.) *Federal Student Loan Portfolio: Federal Student Aid Portfolio Summary. National Student Loan Data System Publication*. Retrieved 9 October 2025, from <https://studentaid.gov/data-center/student/portfolio>. (Average dollars outstanding for recipients of direct loans as of Q3 2025, \$39,495.)

¹⁹ Andara, K., Estep, S., & Salas-Betsch, I. (2025, May). *Breadwinning Women Are a Lifeline for Their Families and the Economy*. Retrieved 25 November 2025, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/breadwinning-women-are-a-lifeline-for-their-families-and-the-economy/> (Breadwinner mothers are defined as single or married mothers who generate at least 50 percent of a household’s income.)

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. (2025). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2024, Table B11001I: Household Type (Including Living Alone) (Hispanic or Latino)*. Retrieved 25 November 2025, from <https://data.census.gov> (Calculation uses family households headed by women and no spouse present.)

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2025). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2024, Table S0201: Selected Population Profile in the United States (Hispanic or Latino)*. Retrieved 25 November 2025, from <https://data.census.gov>

²² YWCA USA and HIT Strategies. (2024). *YWCA YWomenVote 2024 Survey – Spotlight: Latinas*. Retrieved 5 November 2025, from <https://www.ywomenvote.org/results>

²³ YWCA USA and HIT Strategies. (2024). *YWCA YWomenVote 2024 Survey – Executive Summary*. Retrieved 5 November 2025, from <https://www.ywomenvote.org/results>. Respondents from survey were asked, “Of the following issues, which three are the most important to you?”

²⁴ Ibid.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, reproductive health and rights, access to quality, affordable health care and policies that help all people meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at NationalPartnership.org.