

# Black Women and the Wage Gap

MARCH 2021

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 Black women in the United States who work full time, year-round are typically paid just 63 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>1</sup> The wages of Black 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.<sup>2</sup> Overall, women employed full time, year-round are typically paid 82 cents for every dollar paid to men.<sup>3</sup>

## **Even in states with large populations of Black women in the workforce, rampant wage disparities persist, with potentially devastating consequences for Black women and families.**

- In the 25 states (including the District of Columbia) with the largest numbers of Black women working full time, year-round, pay for Black women ranges from 48 to 68 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men in those states.<sup>4</sup>
- Of these 25 states, the District of Columbia and Mississippi have the largest shares of Black women working full time, year-round (as a percentage of their state's overall full-time workforce). Black women in the District of Columbia are paid 49 cents and Black women in Mississippi are paid 57 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>5</sup> Black women face the largest overall cents-on-the-dollar wage gaps in Louisiana (just 48 cents for every

dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men), the District of Columbia (49 cents) and South Carolina and New Jersey (55 cents).<sup>6</sup>

- Of these 25 states, Texas and Georgia have the largest populations of Black women working full time, year-round. Black women in Texas are paid 58 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men and Black women in Georgia are paid 59 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>7</sup>
- Among these 25 states, Maryland, Missouri, Kentucky and Tennessee have the smallest cents-on-the-dollar wage gaps, but Black women in those states still face substantial disparities. On average, Black women are paid just 68 cents in Maryland and 67 cents in Missouri, Kentucky and Tennessee for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>8</sup>

<b>Wage Gap for Black Women by State</b>					
An analysis of the wage gap in the 25 states with the largest number of Black women who work full time, year-round					
<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Black Women Working Full Time, Year-Round</b>	<b>Median Wages for Black Women</b>	<b>Median Wages for White, Non-Hispanic Men</b>	<b>Annual Wage Gap</b>	<b>Cents on the Dollar</b>
Texas	604,243	\$38,958	\$66,880	\$27,922	\$0.58
Georgia	577,381	\$35,843	\$60,626	\$24,783	\$0.59
Florida	546,000	\$32,148	\$53,601	\$21,453	\$0.60
New York	523,605	\$44,407	\$70,954	\$26,547	\$0.63
North Carolina	372,509	\$34,034	\$54,001	\$19,967	\$0.63
Maryland	357,300	\$51,539	\$75,674	\$24,135	\$0.68
California	333,074	\$47,752	\$80,893	\$33,141	\$0.59
Virginia	290,539	\$39,267	\$66,299	\$27,031	\$0.59
Illinois	270,123	\$40,542	\$66,596	\$26,054	\$0.61
Louisiana	229,863	\$29,216	\$60,441	\$31,225	\$0.48
South Carolina	221,751	\$30,389	\$55,150	\$24,761	\$0.55
Pennsylvania	216,282	\$38,168	\$58,920	\$20,752	\$0.65
Ohio	214,338	\$34,416	\$54,849	\$20,443	\$0.63
New Jersey	211,078	\$44,739	\$80,104	\$36,365	\$0.55
Alabama	204,328	\$31,244	\$53,258	\$22,014	\$0.59
Tennessee	193,657	\$34,116	\$51,163	\$16,997	\$0.67

Michigan	190,653	\$35,506	\$56,321	\$20,815	\$0.63
Mississippi	168,375	\$28,752	\$50,746	\$21,994	\$0.57
Missouri	116,351	\$37,734	\$51,789	\$17,055	\$0.67
Indiana	95,030	\$34,050	\$553,154	\$19,104	\$0.64
Massachusetts	83,504	\$42,715	\$76,744	\$34,029	\$0.56
Arkansas	71,863	\$ 31,277	\$48,507	\$17,230	\$0.64
Connecticut	62,221	\$43,018	\$75,204	\$32,186	\$0.57
Kentucky	54,789	\$33,555	\$50,236	\$16,681	\$0.67
District of Columbia	52,548	\$51,966	\$105,646	\$53,680	\$0.49

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019, Geographies: All States within United States*, Table B20017B: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2019 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 (Black or African American Alone); *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2019, Geographies: All States within United States*, Table B20017H: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2019 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 (White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino); and *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019, Geographies: All States within United States*, Table B20005B: Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months by Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2019 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) for the Population 16 Years and Over (Black or African American Alone).

## How Does the Wage Gap Harm Black Women?

Median wages for Black women in the United States are \$41,098 per year, compared to median wages of \$65,208 annually for white, non-Hispanic men. This amounts to a difference of \$24,110 each year.<sup>9</sup> These lost wages mean Black women 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 Black woman working full time, year-round would have enough money for approximately:

- More than two and a half years of child care;<sup>10</sup>
- More than two and a 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;<sup>11</sup>
- More than 16 additional months of premiums for employer-based health insurance;<sup>12</sup>
- 153 more weeks of food for her family (three years' worth);<sup>13</sup>
- Fifteen additional months of mortgage and utilities payments;<sup>14</sup>
- Twenty-two more months of rent;<sup>15</sup>
- Nearly 20 additional years of birth control;<sup>16</sup> or
- Enough money to pay off student loan debt in just over one year.<sup>17</sup>

## Black Women and Their Families Cannot Afford Discrimination and Lower Wages

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

- Almost 80 percent of Black mothers are key breadwinners for their families, which means their households rely heavily on their wages to make ends meet and get ahead;<sup>18</sup>
- Four million family households in the United States are headed by Black women<sup>19</sup> – and nearly 1 in 4 of those households live below the poverty level.<sup>20</sup> This means that more than 900,000 family households headed by Black women live in poverty, demonstrating the imperative to eliminate the wage gap.

## The Public Overwhelmingly Supports Fair Pay Policies

- Black women experience workplace harassment and discrimination at high rates. In a recent survey conducted by TIME'SUP, over half of Black women surveyed (55 percent) reported experiencing gender or racial obstacles to opportunity in the workplace.<sup>21</sup>
- Black women want Congress to act. In a survey of 2020 voters, more than 9 in 10 (91 percent) Black women surveyed feel strongly that Congress should pass paid family and medical leave legislation as well as pass paid sick days legislation (94 percent).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Table PINC-05: Work Experience in 2019 – People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2018, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Disability Status*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, 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 women and men who worked full time, year-round in 2019; full time is defined as 35 hours a week or more)

<sup>2</sup> Glynn, S. J. (2018, April). *Gender wage inequality: What we know and how we can fix it*. Retrieved 18 March 2021 from Washington Center for Equitable Growth website: <https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/gender-wage-inequality/?longform=true>

<sup>3</sup> See note 1.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019, Geographies: All States within United States, Tables B20017B: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2019 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 18 March 2021, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B20017B&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B20017B>; U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019, Geographies: All States within United States, B20017H: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2019 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 18 March 2021, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B20017H&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B20017H> (This calculation is based on a comparison of the median earnings of white, non-Hispanic men working full time, year-round with that of Black women working full time, year-round.); U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019, Geographies: All States within United States, Table B20005B: Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months by Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2019 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) for the Population 16 Years and Over (Black or African American Alone)*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B20005B&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B20005B>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019, Geographies: All States within United States, Table B20005: Sex By Work Experience in the Past 12 Months by Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2019 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) for the Population 16 Years and Over*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B20005&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B20005> (Black women comprise 18.3 percent of the full-time, year-round workforce in the District of Columbia and 17.9 percent of the full-time, year-round workforce in Mississippi.)

<sup>6</sup> See note 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See note 1.

<sup>10</sup> Child Care Aware of America. (2019). *The U.S. and the High Price of Child Care: An Examination of a Broken System*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3957809/2019%20Price%20of%20Care%20State%20Sheets/Final-TheUSandtheHighPriceofChildCare-AnExaminationofaBrokenSystem.pdf>; Estimate of \$9,254 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."

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2018, November). *Digest of Education Statistics: 2018* (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 2017-18), Chapter 3. Retrieved 19 March 2020, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_330.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_330.10.asp) (The average total annual cost of undergraduate tuition and required fees is \$9,037 for a four-year public college or university or \$3,243 for a two-year college.)

<sup>12</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (n.d.) *Average Annual Single Premium per Enrolled Employee For Employer-Based Health Insurance, 2018*. Retrieved 19 March 2020, from <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/single-coverage/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Employee%20Contribution%22,%22sort%22:%22desc%22%7D>

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020, September). *Consumer Expenditure - 2018-2098*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/cesan.pdf> (Calculation uses overall average "food" cost.)

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2019, Table DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=dp04&d=ACS%201>

*Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP04&hidePreview=true* (Calculation uses median monthly owner costs for housing units with a mortgage.)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. (Calculation uses median gross rent, occupied units paying rent)

<sup>16</sup> Center for American Progress. (2012, February 15). *The High Costs of Birth Control: It's Not As Affordable As You Think*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from [https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2012/02/pdf/BC\\_costs.pdf](https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2012/02/pdf/BC_costs.pdf) (Calculated from a survey of retail costs of oral contraceptives for the uninsured and average copays, combined with the average cost of doctor visits to obtain the prescription. While the Affordable Care Act greatly advanced access to birth control by requiring coverage of contraceptives without cost sharing, many women still must pay out of pocket because they lack insurance, because their plan is grandfathered and does not cover contraceptives without a copay, or because their plan only covers generics.)

<sup>17</sup> Siegel Bernard, T., & Russell, K. (2018, July 11). *The New Toll of American Student Debt in 3 Charts*. *The New York Times*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/your-money/student-loan-debt-parents.html> (The average debt load at graduation for a student receiving a bachelor's degree was \$30,301 in 2015-2016.)

<sup>18</sup> Shaw, E., Mason, C., Lacarte, V., & Jauregui, E. (2020, May). *Holding Up Half the Sky: Mothers as Workers, Primary Caregivers, & Breadwinners During COVID-19*. Retrieved 18 March 2021 from the Institute for Women's Policy Research: <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Holding-Up-Half-the-Sky-Mothers-as-Breadwinners.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2019, Table B11001B: Household Type (Including Living Alone) (Black or African American Alone)*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B11001B&tid=ACSDT1Y2019.B11001B&hidePreview=true> (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.)

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2019, Table S0201: Selected Population Profile in the United States (Black or African American alone)*. Retrieved 19 March 2020, from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S0201&tid=ACSSPP1Y2019.S0201> (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 2019 was \$20,598 for a single householder and two children under 18.)

<sup>21</sup> TIME'S UP Foundation (2020, July 30). *Gender and racial inequity during crisis: The pay gap*. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from <https://timesupfoundation.org/work/times-up-pay-up/gender-and-racial-inequity-during-crisis-the-pay-gap/>

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<sup>22</sup> Lake Research Partners and the Tarrance Group (2020, November 19). New Election Exit Poll Shows Bipartisan Support for Policies to Address Caregiving Crisis. Retrieved 18 March 2021, from <https://timesupnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Election-Eve-Omnibus-Caregiving-Poll-Memo.pdf>

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