Closing the Wage Gap for All Women Workers

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Women who worked full time, year-round in 2020 were paid just 83 cents for every dollar that was paid to a man working full time, year-round. This full-time wage gap, as large as it is, has always left out millions of workers – disproportionately women of color – who work part-time or for only part of a year, including seasonal farmworkers, people working part-time to manage caregiving, and those who want to work more hours but whose employers deny them full-time status and benefits. The pandemic’s unprecedented health and caregiving demands, employment losses and cutbacks in work hours pushed even more women out of full time, year-round work, with the most acute drops among Latina, Black and Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander women. As a result, in 2020 more than 33 million women workers are not counted in the full-time wage gap.²

Table 1. Number of Women Excluded from the Full-Time Wage Gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women Who Worked Full Time, Year-Round</th>
<th>All Women with Earnings</th>
<th>Not Counted in Full-Time Wage Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>52,035,000</td>
<td>80,779,000</td>
<td>28,744,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>45,859,000</td>
<td>79,248,000</td>
<td>33,389,000</td>
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Women of color in the United States experience the nation’s persistent and pervasive gender wage gap most severely: across all workers in 2020, including those working part-time or part of the year, women were paid just 73 cents for every dollar paid to a man, while Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander women were paid 75 cents, white, non-Hispanic women are paid 73 cents, Black women are paid 58 cents, Native American women 50 cents and Latina women just 49 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.³

The gaps 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. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau reveal the size of that gap among women who hold full-time, year-round jobs by race/ethnicity. The cents-on-the-dollar difference adds up, resulting in lost wages that mean women have less money to support themselves and their families.
Chart 1. Decline in Full Time, Year-Round Employment by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

The Wage Gap Is Costly for Women and their Families

Across all racial and ethnic groups, women in the United States are typically paid 73 cents for every dollar paid to men. The median annual pay for women is $35,838 while the median annual pay for men is $49,389 – a difference of $13,551 per year. On average, women lose a combined total of nearly $1.6 trillion every year due to the overall wage gap.

If the annual wage gap were eliminated, a typical woman working in the United States would have enough money to pay for approximately:

- More than 17 additional months of child care;
- More than a full additional year of tuition and fees for a four-year public university, or the full cost of tuition and fees for a two-year college;
- Nearly two years of food;
- Nearly nine additional months of premiums for employer-based health insurance;
- More than eight months of mortgage and utilities payments, or more than one year of rent;
- Over 11 additional years of birth control;
- Or enough money to pay off student loan debt in under three years.
required fees is $9,349 for a four-year public college or university or $3,377 for a two-year college.


4 See note 3.

5 See note 3. (Unpublished calculation based on the mean annual pay for all women and men who worked full time, year-round in 2020, multiplied by the total number of women working full time, year-round in 2020.)

6 Child Care Aware of America. (2020). Picking Up the Pieces: Building a Better Child Care System Post COVID-19. Retrieved 20 October 2021, from https://www.childcareaware.org/picking-up-the-pieces/. The authors note that the price of child care varies significantly across the United States, but estimate that the average price is between $9,200 and $9,600. This analysis uses the midpoint of that range, $9,400, as the average price for child care.


9 Kaiser Family Foundation. (n.d.) Average Annual Single Premium per Enrolled Employee For Employer-Based Health Insurance, 2020. Retrieved 11 March 2022, from https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/single-coverage/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22%22Employee%20Contribution%22,%22%22sort%22:%22desc%22%7D


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

12 Center for American Progress. (2012, February 15). The High Costs of Birth Control: It’s Not As Affordable As You Think. Retrieved 11 March 2022, from 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.)