



# Women Deserve Equal Pay- Very Little Progress in Closing the Gap

In the United States, full-time, year-round working women continue to be paid less than her male counterpart. Women on average are paid only 78 cents for every dollar a male employee is paid. For older women and women of color, the gap is significantly wider. These wage gaps stubbornly remain despite the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, and a variety of laws prohibiting employment discrimination based on gender. Additionally, women's progress in education and workforce participation, plus men's wages rising at a slower rate, has helped to narrow the gap. But closure of the gap has stalled in recent years and, at this slow pace, one estimate indicates that it will take 134 years to close the gap!

Women still are not receiving equal pay for equal work, let alone equal pay for work of equal value. This disparity not only affects women's spending power and the economic well-being of their families, it penalizes their retirement security by creating gaps in Social Security benefits, pension amounts and their ability to save and invest.

- In 2013, the average woman holding a year-round, full-time position was paid 78 cents for every \$1.00 paid to men, on average. For women of color, the gap is even wider: In comparison to the average men's dollar, African American women were paid 64 cents and Latinas 54 cents.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2013, households where women were the sole breadwinner had the lowest average income (\$35,154) compared to the household of an unwed man (\$50,625).<sup>2</sup> Far greater proportions of women cut back or interrupt time in the paid workforce to deal with family responsibilities, such as caring for their children or elderly family members.<sup>3</sup> This makes it increasingly difficult for single mothers with children younger than 18 to provide them with adequate nutrition, shelter, and educational resources.<sup>4</sup>
- Over a woman's working lifetime (approximately 47 years), she will be cheated out of \$700,000 to \$2 million in income due to the wage gap.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2014, real wages for white, black, and Latina women changed by less than one percent. In contrast, real wages for Asian women increased by approximately one percent, however, in the past ten years, real wages for most women have plateaued.<sup>6</sup>
- According to the Center for American Progress, women's access to higher education has shrunken the gap by seven percent. However, a college-educated woman in 2013 makes \$18,451 less than her male

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<sup>1</sup> American Association of University Women: [By the Numbers: A Look at the Gender Pay Gap 2015 Edition](#)

<sup>2</sup> United States Census: [Income and Poverty in the United States: 2013](#) pg. 7

<sup>3</sup> Wall Street Journal: [Women's Pay Compared to Men's from 1960 to 2013](#)

<sup>4</sup> American Association of University Women: [The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap](#) pg. 4

<sup>5</sup> National Committee on Pay Equity: [The Wage Gap Over Time](#)

<sup>6</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research: [The Gender Wage Gap: 2014](#) pg. 2

counterpart.<sup>7</sup> Women attending a private nonprofit university face a wage gap of 75% upon graduation.<sup>8</sup>

- The wage gap persists based on a number of factors including "undervaluing women workers," workplace discrimination, sexual harassment, race, parental and marital status, and age.<sup>9</sup> However, less than half (41.1%) of the reasons why the wage gap exists today are unexplained.<sup>10</sup>
- Overall, women employed in the service industry are twice as likely to receive poverty-level salaries compared to only two of the most common positions for men: maintenance workers and cooks.<sup>11</sup>
- As a woman ages she will notice a cut in her salary, increasing the wage gap significantly. Generally, women over the age of 54 make an average of 59 cents to men's dollar.<sup>12</sup> This number decreases dramatically once race is taken into account.

## What You Can Do:

1. **Call members of your Congressional delegation** to ask them to co-sponsor the **Paycheck Fairness Act**. The House version (H.R. 1619) of the Paycheck Fairness Act is sponsored by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) and the Senate version (S. 862) is sponsored by Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) In order to build up steam for this bill, we need to increase the number of co-sponsors. Please contact your senators and representative to encourage them to co-sponsor this important bill; the Capitol switchboard is 202-224-3121 or check congress.gov/ for members' contact information.
2. **Wear red on Equal Pay Day**. If we're going to be "in the red," we might as well wear it proudly to show our determination to end the wage gap.
3. **Host an "Un-happy hour" on Equal Pay Day** to signal your dissatisfaction with the wage gap. See if a local bar, club, or restaurant (try the women-owned ones first!) will give you drink specials for the night: ideas include Dollar Drinks for 78 Cents or women pay 78% of their tabs and men pay 100%. Use this social time to network and plan local activities that can lead to improved wages for women and economic health for their families.
4. **Attend a local rally or plan one**. Check with your NOW chapter and other local groups in your area to see if anyone is planning a rally. Take your NOW rounds or homemade signs, fact sheets, alerts and determination...and feel free to wear red.
5. **Learn more about the wage gap**. Here are some additional resources on pay equity:
  - [National Committee on Pay Equity](#) and [Pay Equity Information](#), a guide to dozens of studies and fact sheets
  - [American Association of University Women: The Gender Pay Gap by State and Congressional District](#), and [The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap 2015 Edition](#)
  - [Institute for Women's Policy Research: The Gender Wage Gap 2014, Earnings Differences by Race and Ethnicity](#)

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<sup>7</sup> American Association of University Women: [Pay Equity and Workplace Opportunity: A Simple Matter of Fairness](#) pg. 3 (PDF)

<sup>8</sup> American Association of University Women: [Graduating to a Pay Gap: The Earnings of Women and Men One Year after College Graduation](#) pg. 11 (PDF)

<sup>9</sup> The WAGE Project: [Why is there a Wage Gap?](#)

<sup>10</sup> Center for American Progress: [What Causes the Gender Wage Gap?](#)

<sup>11</sup> Institute for Women's Policy Research: [The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation 2013](#) pg. 3

<sup>12</sup> The WAGE Project: [Who is Affected by the Wage Gap?](#)