

The Wage Gap

In 2005, women, on average, earned only 77 cents for every dollar the average man earned.

What is the Wage Gap?

The wage gap is calculated by comparing the median wages of women and men who work full-time.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) reports that the following factors contribute to the wage gap:

- Education
- Skill and Experience
- Numbers of Women and Men Entering the Workforce
- Being in a Union
- Strength of Economy
- Occupational Segregation

Wage discrimination, occurs when women are:

- Paid less because they are not considered “primary breadwinners”
- Hired less frequently in high-wage jobs
- Given fewer training and mentoring opportunities than other workers
- Given smaller benefits and pension packages than men working in the same jobs

Compensation discrimination occurs when an employer sets the wage for jobs held mainly by women below that of jobs that are held mainly by men. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, compensation discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability is prohibited.



The Wage Gap and Pay Equity

The wage gap is a problem: a difference exists in wages paid to women and men.

Pay equity is a solution. Employers and policy makers can set wages to make them the same for women and men (as well as minorities).

The wage gap compares the average wages of women and men who work full-time and pay equity is a means of stopping sex and race discrimination in the wage-setting system.

Effect on Women Workers

- Lower wages
- Less purchasing power
- Less economic power
- Less self-sufficiency
- Higher rates of poverty
- Poorer standard of living during retirement
- Loss of wages over the course of a lifetime

Equal Pay Act of 1963

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects individuals against employment discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race, color, national origin, and religion. The Equal Pay Act requires that men and women be given equal pay for equal work in the same establishment.

Who Else is Affected?

Men:

- Men of color are affected by the wage gap in the same way as women.
- Men employed in female-dominated occupations also suffer from the wage gap.
- Men who are married to or live with working women suffer lower family and household income.

Children:

- Most children are supported by the income of at least one woman:
 - 60% of working women earn about half or more of their families income.
 - 29% of working women earn all of their families income.
- Both married and single mothers are working outside the home in record numbers.
- The poverty of mothers increases a child's chances of infant mortality, poor health, inadequate diet, low school achievement, high school dropout rate, unemployment or underemployment as adults.

Who is Fighting For You?

The **National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE)** is a coalition of organizations working to eliminate sex- and race-based wage discrimination and to achieve pay equity. Its purpose is to close the wage gap and sponsor the annual Equal Pay Day. Equal Pay Day is held on a Tuesday in April to indicate how far into each year a woman must work to earn as much as a man earned in the previous year. Visit their website at www.pay-equity.org for information.

Women Work!'s equal pay initiative focuses on educating individuals about the wage gap, including working with employers to implement fair pay policies, fighting the wage gap in their own lives and advocating for equal pay legislation on both federal and state levels. For more information, visit www.womenwork.org.

What Can YOU Do?

Get a Non-Traditional Job: Non-traditional jobs are jobs that are historically held by men; for example, an electrician. Non-traditional jobs are interesting and often make more money than jobs traditionally held by women. Check out Women Work!'s *Non-Traditional Jobs Tip Sheet*.

Learn How to Negotiate Your Salary: Women are less likely than men to negotiate their salaries; *Women Work!'s Career Center* at www.womenwork.org provides you with steps to get the salary you want *and* deserve.

Join a Union: Union women often have higher wages than non-union men.

Start (or Join) a WAGE Club: The WAGE (Women Are Getting Even) Project is an organization whose purpose is stop compensation discrimination and close the wage gap. WAGE clubs are groups of women around the country just like you that form to talk about the wage gap and to decide what action needs to be taken. For more information visit www.wageproject.org.

File a Claim: The Equal Employment Opportunity Commissions (EEOC) is the federal organization that works to stop discrimination in the workplace. Their website can tell you all you need to know about filing a claim if you think you have been discriminated against. Visit www.eeoc.gov.