

For Women in the United States Equal Pay Remains Out of Reach

More than 40 years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act, women's wages continue to lag behind their male counterparts' wages; today, women are paid only 77 cents for every dollar that men are paid. With the majority of families in the United States relying on women's wages to make ends meet, the wage gap is not only unfair – it also has serious consequences for the economic well-being of our families and our nation.

Despite significant progress, women continue to earn far less than their male counterparts.

- In 2006, the average full-time working woman was paid only 77 cents for every dollar that a man earned.¹
- This gap remains even after differences in age, education, geography, hours worked, and other factors have been taken into account.
- One year after college graduation, women are paid only 80 percent of what their male counterparts earn. Ten years after graduation, women fall further behind, earning only 69 percent of what men are paid.²
- As women get older, the wage gap widens.³
- Although the wage gap has been closing, recent analysis reveals that approximately 60 percent of the change is due to a decrease in men's real earnings, not an increase in women's.⁴

While most women are affected by the wage gap, it does not affect all women equally.

- The wage gap is larger for *women of color*. African-American women are paid only 66 cents on the dollar compared to white men, while Hispanic women are paid just 54 cents for every dollar white men are paid.⁵
- *Women with children* earn 10 to 15 percent less than childless women. Men with children do not experience a similar family penalty.⁶

The wage gap hurts families and perpetuates poverty.

- A 1999 study showed that working women's families lose a total of \$200 billion in income each year because of the wage gap. This translates into an average loss of \$4,000 per family annually.⁷
- The same study concluded that if working single mothers were paid the same as comparably skilled men, their poverty rates would be cut in half.⁸
- Over a working lifetime, the wage gap costs a high school graduate and her family an average of \$700,000 in lost wages.⁹

Equal Pay Remains Out of Reach, cont.

The wage gap is rooted in sex-based employment discrimination.

- Even when factors such as marriage, children, and work patterns are accounted for, there is still a significant gap between men's and women's earnings. In 2003, the United States General Accountability Office (GAO) identified a 20 percent pay gap between men and women that cannot be explained or justified.¹⁰

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1. U.S. Census Bureau, *Median Earnings in the past 12 months (In 2006 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) of Workers by Sex and Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Earnings by Selected Characteristics*. 2006.
 2. Goldberg Dey, Judy and Catherine Hill, "Behind the Pay Gap." AAUW Educational Foundation. 2007. Available at <http://www.aauw.org/research/behindPayGap.cfm>.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Supra note 1.
 6. Jane Waldfogel, "Family Gap in Pay for Women with Children." In *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12:1, 5. 1998.
 7. Institute for Women's Policy Research, *Equal Pay for Working Families*. 1999. Available at www.iwpr.org/pdf/c344/pdf.
 8. Ibid.
 9. The Wage Project, "What Are the Costs of the Wage Gap?" Available at www.wageproject.org/content/gap/costs.php. Accessed September 19, 2007.
 10. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Women's Earnings: Work Patterns Partially Explain Differences between Men's and Women's Earnings*. Report GAO-04-35. 2003.

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Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advances economic justice and equality for women through education, advocacy and organizing. Since 1978, the Network has assisted more than 10 million women to successfully enter, re-enter and advance in the workforce. Through supporting, advocating and increasing women's economic self-sufficiency, Women Work! members strengthen families and communities.