

AAUW Supports Measures to Eliminate Gender and Racial Pay Gaps

MARCH 14, 2023 is Equal Pay Day

According to newly released statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau of Labor Statistics, women earn 84% of what their male counterparts do. This means that for every dollar a man is paid, for the same or equivalent work, a woman is only paid 84 cents. This statistic includes full-time, part-time, and year-round workers.

The pay gap is a gap at all levels of work in almost every occupation and in every state. While the gap is smallest when women enter the labor force, the gap grows throughout a woman's career. This means that as women progress in the workforce, they increasingly earn less money than their male counterparts.

And the gap exists in fields and occupations, even where women are a larger percentage of the workforce. For example, women make up most of the part-time workforce (59% compared to 41% of men) and women of color are more likely to be part-time than their white counterparts. However, these part-time workers are three times more likely to be paid at the federal minimum wage (presently \$7.25 if their state has no other minimum wage law) than at a rate equivalent to their value. In addition, rarely do these workers have access to any benefits such as paid leave, sick time, or healthcare benefits. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour is a significant way to close the gender and racial pay gaps.

Racial identity has also been shown to be a big factor in the average wage for all workers, with no category equaling that of non-Hispanic white men. Asian women are the highest, with 92% parity for full-time, year-round employment and 86% for all Asian women workers - which includes part-time workers. Native American women and Latina women are the lowest paid, and white, non-Hispanic women are a full 12% below Asian women. It is noteworthy that women are increasingly the main breadwinners. Chiseling away at salary equity puts added stress on already compromised families. The cost of childcare alone is debilitating to single-parent households.

What can be done?

Congress should pass a Paycheck Fairness Act whereby employers must provide equal pay for equal jobs regardless of gender or race. Furthermore, it should be illegal to establish pay based on an employee's pay history, and employees should not be penalized for discussing, disclosing, or inquiring about their wages.

Other Acts that are needed: Family and Medical Insurance Leave Act to provide health insurance and medical leave, including sick pay.

Early childhood education programs to improve childcare.

The Federal minimum wage raised to \$15.

What can YOU do?

Educate yourself on your “market value” and how to negotiate to achieve your true value. (AAUW provides a Work Smart Salary-negotiation course for this purpose.

Communicate with your local and federal legislators in support of these important changes for our workforce. Keep abreast of movements to advocate for fair employment and fair pay and advocate for and encourage YOUR state or federal legislator to vote YES for measures that provide equity, fairness, and assistance for all workers.