

The Gender Pay Gap

Despite major gains in gender equity over the past century, “equal pay for equal work” remains elusive for women in the modern workplace. In fact, women overall make just 79 cents for every one dollar a man makes in a position of similar skill in the same industry; that is equivalent to a loss of half a million dollars over the course of a woman’s career.

Converting this into the number of days women work for free based on their pay scale really illustrates the large disparity between men and women. In the United States, on a yearly basis, women work about 133 days free, 154 free days in Germany, 139 free days in Canada and 128 free days in China.

In addition, while incomes do rise with education across gender and race, and the pay gap dramatically decreases with education, the pay gap actually widens between men and women at the highest end of the educational attainment spectrum.

Moreover, women of color make even less than their white female counterparts. Black women make just 67 cents for every dollar their white male counterparts make, and Hispanic and Latina women making just 61 cents for every dollar of their white male counterparts.

Though researchers have found that women of color tend to be offered jobs that are typically low paying, such as healthcare support and education, the pay gap holds true and even widens when controlled for men and women of color in the same field. In fact, when more women enter traditionally male, and high paid fields, the average wage for those jobs actually decrease for no other reason than a shift in gender make up.

There are many reasons for our society to promote equal pay among men and women of all races. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) acknowledges that having a more diverse workforce across sectors will lead to more productive and innovative businesses. With a diversity of population comes differing perspectives, ideas, and solutions. Additionally, in today’s society, about 40 percent of women are the breadwinners for their families (this number is even higher for black mothers). Equal pay for all workers can be the difference between poverty and sustainability for these families, which in turn will lead to a strong economy in the future.

It is crucial that our society eliminates gender pay gap. It is time to take a stand and demand equal pay for all workers, no matter their gender or race. We need to create a society for our daughters where they can look to their futures with the confidence that their work will be just as valued as their male coworkers. We must create a society where workers don’t feel powerless simply because they are female.