

# THE GENDER WAGE GAP




**\$930 billion**

**Average combined total lost each year by working women in the U.S. due to the gender wage gap<sup>3</sup>**

## The Economics of the Gender Wage Gap

Women in the United States earn **83 cents** for every dollar a man earns.<sup>1</sup> The trend is known as the gender wage gap, or pay inequity, and is prevalent in every state in the United States. A woman who works full-time, year-round earns an average salary of \$50,982 per year in comparison to the \$61,417 a man makes with a full-time job, adding up to an **annual wage gap of \$10,435**.<sup>2</sup> This wage gap has negative impacts on women, both economically and on their health.

The wage gap exists regardless of the industry and job in which a woman is employed.<sup>4</sup>

Discrimination against women in the workplace can affect how, or if, they advance in their careers.

**Women make up most of our essential workers (i.e. nurses and teachers), but they are still paid less<sup>5</sup>**

**18.7%**

The gap in pay among male and female **educators**

**\$7,297**

The annual amount male nurses are paid over female **nurses**



The gender wage gap for **working mothers** is worse than for women working full-time who do not have children. Mothers are paid **71 cents** for every dollar that a father makes.<sup>6</sup>

Women suffer from the wage gap even as they progress along the **education** ladder. Women who work full time and have a master's degree still make only **70 cents** for every dollar a man earns (regardless of whether or not the man has a matching or lesser degree).<sup>7</sup>



The wage gap is worse for women of color. On average, for every dollar a non-hispanic white man makes:<sup>8</sup>

**64¢**

**Black women** are paid 64 cents

**57¢**

**Latinx women** are paid 57 cents

**60¢**

**Native women** are paid 60 cents

At the current rates of change, it would take **41 years** to begin closing the wage gap in the United States<sup>9</sup>

**2063**

**White women** would achieve equal pay

**2124**

**Black women** would achieve equal pay

**2233**

**Latinx women** would achieve equal pay

2022 2036 2052 2068 2084 2100 2116 2132 2148 2164 2180 2196 2212 2228 2244

# COVID-19 and the Gender Wage Gap

Although the wage gap appears to have decreased from 82 cents to 83 cents from 2019-2020, the change can be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic. **During COVID-19 in 2020, more women than men lost their jobs.** According to the Pew Research Center, 11.9 million women and 9.0 million men lost their jobs in 2020.<sup>10</sup> Most of the women who lost their jobs were low-wage workers.

The average wage gap only accounts for women who are currently employed. With mostly lower wage earners and women leaving the work force, those wages were not included in the average count, so it appears as though women were making more money. What happened, however, is as women with low wages were removed from the count, the women who were left, often with higher wages, made up a greater portion of the average pay calculation. This led to a portrayal of increased average earnings among women.<sup>11</sup>

## The substantial exit of women from the workforce during COVID was due to several underlying reasons:

- Massive layoffs by employers
- Lack of access to childcare
- Additional household work including doing more household chores, spending more time with children, managing schedules
- The impact of remote work including inflexible work schedules, lack of safety for frontline and low-wage workers, added job responsibilities, and lack of paid sick and caregiving leave

## During COVID, women were faced with tough choices and additional responsibilities like:

- Caring for children while schools shut down or became remote, especially for single mothers
- Caring for family members if they became sick
- Inflexible work schedules that did not allow for new caregiving needs

**Moreover, more women than men had to leave their jobs when faced with a choice.**

For example: if one parent had to stay home for care, women in heterosexual relationships were often the ones exiting the workforce because they made less money than their male partners.

**11.9 million**  
women lost their jobs during COVID-19 in 2020

The majority of them were women being paid lower wages...  
...leading to a misleading portrayal of a decrease in the gender wage gap.

Importantly, women of color continued to face greater responsibilities and greater discrimination in their job flexibility and pay than their White, non-Hispanic counterparts.



# Pay Inequity and the Connection to Intimate Partner Violence

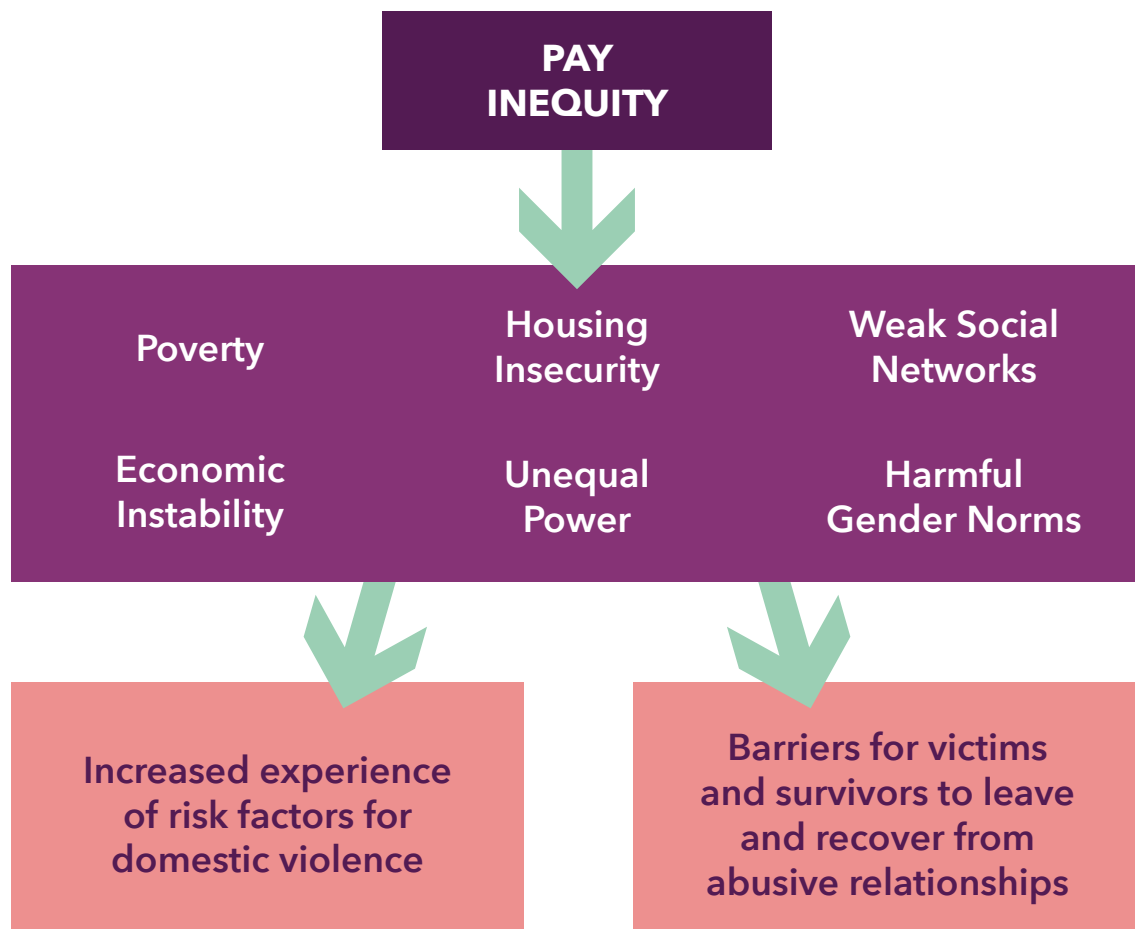
PCADV sees the connection from pay equity to domestic violence in two ways.

**1** If pay is less equitable, that gap in funds affects women and their families. They are more likely to encounter poverty, economic instability, housing insecurity, weak social networks, unequal power, and harmful norms—all of which increase the risk of experiencing domestic violence.

- Pay inequity puts folks in a position where they are more vulnerable to risk factors for domestic violence, particularly women and others with marginalized identities, or multiple identities which are marginalized

**2** Being paid inequitably and having less access to economic opportunity and support is also used by people who abuse to maintain an imbalance of power and control. When domestic violence is occurring and someone is being paid inequitably, major barriers exist that make it challenging for victims and survivors to leave abusive relationships and find financial independence. These barriers include:

- Lack of financial resources to leave the relationship or support themselves independently
- Lack of financial resources to recover and heal (i.e., affordable housing, access to healthcare)



# Pay Equity Action Steps

The gender wage gap is one of the biggest issues facing the country today. In this section, we list out action steps individuals and organizations can undertake. Research suggests these steps can help in decreasing the wage gap and achieving pay equity:



## What individuals can do:



### Connect with your Pennsylvania local domestic violence program

- Your local domestic violence program is a great resource for supporting survivors and their economic needs. [Find your local Pennsylvania program here.](#)



### Take available finance and salary negotiation courses

- AAUW has an [online salary negotiation course](#) to give you the tools and confidence to advocate for better benefits and pay.



### Visit your state's labor law compliance website if you think you are experiencing pay discrimination

- Pennsylvania's labor law compliance website that can be found [here](#). You can also visit general steps [here, on page 25](#).

## What organizations can do:

Pay equity is essential to having a motivated workforce.<sup>12</sup>



### Provide sick and safe leave to all employees, preferably paid<sup>13</sup>

- This includes leave for illness. It also includes needed leave for survivor safety, and a range of ever-changing caregiving needs for the whole family, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Provide paid parental leave to parents<sup>14</sup>

- Caretaking responsibilities still fall primarily with women. Paid leave can help women remain in the workforce and equalize caregiving in two-parent heterosexual households.



### Offer flexible work scheduling to all employees

- Flexible work schedules (remote or in-person) allows employees to meet their work responsibilities without sacrificing needs at home, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>15</sup>

## What organizations can do (cont.):

### Make simple changes to your hiring practices. These include:



Banning the use of salary history<sup>16</sup>

- If people were the subject of pay inequity at previous jobs, this practice perpetuates that gap.



Publish wage or salary ranges on job postings<sup>17</sup>

- Where salary ranges are published, there exists a smaller pay gap.<sup>18</sup> Posting wages or salaries offers transparency when job applicants are negotiating their pay.



Prohibit retaliation for wage disclosure<sup>19</sup>

- Pay disparities are difficult to detect especially when employees are unable to discuss their wages.



Learn about, and implement equitable recruitment, hiring and promotion practices<sup>20</sup>

- To achieve pay equity, employers should commit to equity in hiring and promotion practices including addressing biases in the process and ensuring proportionate representation by gender and race. Read [AAUW's report on Systemic Racism and the Gender Pay Gap](#) for more information.



Review your job descriptions and template language for unnecessary requirements<sup>21</sup>

- For example, not all jobs require an advanced degree or the ability to lift a certain weight. Keeping these requirements if they are not necessary limits your candidate pool.



Conduct a pay audit of your organization or company and continue to do so regularly<sup>22</sup>



### Implement diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices

- Pay inequity exists because of inequities and discrimination at structural, policy, and individual levels. Working towards equity in your organization is crucial to supporting your pay equity efforts.



### Connect with your Pennsylvania local domestic violence program

- Local domestic violence programs are a great asset for connecting to employees who may be or may know someone who is experiencing domestic violence.

# Advocate for policies that support pay equity

## In addition, organizations and individuals can advocate for policies that lead to pay equity:

- Paid sick and safe leave
- Paid parental leave
- A living wage; eliminate tipped positions
  - Research suggests raising the living wage can lift women and families out of poverty and increase the economic bargaining power of women.<sup>23</sup>
  - However, organizations should also focus on providing a thriving wage. If a living wage provides for basic needs (food, housing, transportation), a thriving wage is the amount of money needed for a person to thrive beyond paycheck-to-paycheck survival, and provides for savings, travel, and hobbies.<sup>24</sup>
  - Eliminating tipped positions shrinks the pay gap and reduces poverty among low-wage workers.<sup>25</sup>
- Strengthen and expand Medicaid and Medicare
  - Expansion of these programs would promote a more equitable distribution of resources, providing protection for people who do not qualify or make enough money to purchase healthcare.<sup>26</sup>
- Anti-discrimination protections
  - Anti-discrimination laws are important for protecting groups experiencing oppression including pregnant people, people with disabilities, people who are transgender, and people of color, among others.
- Strengthen the Equal Pay Act
  - There are currently loopholes in the Equal Pay Act that allow employers to avoid accountability to pay equity, i.e. changing job titles for men and women in the same position, even though the job responsibilities are the same. This allows organizations to avoid legal charges in case someone makes a case of getting paid less; they can always say the job titles are different and hence the different pay.
- Quality affordable childcare support
  - States that offer childcare have a smaller pay gap on average<sup>27</sup>. According to the Center for American Progress, “childcare is the work that enables all other work” and is also imperative to economic growth.<sup>28</sup>
- Student debt forgiveness
  - Pay inequity for women begins after college. Women own two-thirds of the country’s student loan debt, owe more on average than their male peers, and make less money because of the pay gap.<sup>29</sup>
- Collect comprehensive pay data
  - Ensuring pay equity also requires the ability to identify disparities, trends, and hold employers accountable for inequitable practices.<sup>30</sup>

## Become an Advocate!

Closing the gender wage gap will take our collective action to achieve. You can use your voice to join the fight for pay equity and to stand with survivors on policy issues. Become an Advocate today! Sign up at:

[PCADV.org/advocate](https://www.pcadv.org/advocate)



# Want to learn more about pay equity and the wage gap?

## LOCAL

For local information on pay inequity and potential solutions in Pennsylvania, visit:

- Pay equity report and fact sheet:  
<https://www.pcadv.org/resources/pay-equity-report-fact-sheet/>
- Gender Equity Commission of Pittsburgh:  
<https://pittsburghpa.gov/gec/>
- Black Women's Policy Center, Women and Girls Foundation, and YWCA Greater Pittsburgh collaboration:  
<https://www.ywcapgh.org/equalpay/>
- AAUW Pennsylvania:  
<https://aauw-pa.aauw.net/>



## NATIONAL

For national general information on pay inequity and potential solutions, visit:

- AAUW:  
<https://www.aauw.org/issues/equity/pay-gap/>
- Potential solutions, The Simple Truth reports:  
<https://www.aauw.org/resources/research/simple-truth/>
- Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR):  
<https://iwpr.org/>
- National Partnership for Women & Families:  
<https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/economic-justice/>
- FreeFrom:  
<https://www.freefrom.org/>
- Allstate Foundation:  
<https://allstatefoundation.org/what-we-do/end-domestic-violence/>



# Endnotes

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