



How to Talk About: **THE WAGE GAP**

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Five Key Points About the Wage Gap

- 1 THE RAW WAGE GAP IS NOT A MEASURE OF EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK.**
The raw wage gap is not a measure of “equal pay for equal work.” It is simply a comparison of averages. The oft-cited statistic from the Department of Labor that women earn 83 cents on the dollar that men make does not compare women and men in the same profession who work the same hours, with the same qualifications, experience and talent.
- 2 OVERALL, MEN AND WOMEN MAKE DIFFERENT CHOICES.**
The wage gap is not driven by widespread discrimination. On average, women work fewer hours and in lower-paying professions than men. Women also tend to work in safer and more flexible conditions, and take longer leaves of absence from the workplace due to childbearing and rearing.
- 3 WAGE DISCRIMINATION IS ALREADY ILLEGAL IN THE U.S.**
Wage discrimination is already illegal in the U.S. and has been since 1963 when the Equal Pay Act was signed into law. The 1964 Civil Rights Act also protects women from harassment and baseless gender discrimination in the workplace. This isn't to say that sexism or bad bosses don't exist, but discrimination is already illegal.
- 4 THE PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT WON'T CLOSE THE WAGE GAP.**
The Paycheck Fairness Act would change the legal system to encourage more lawsuits and increase government oversight over businesses compensation decisions.
- 5 KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.**
Men and women often have different priorities when it comes to work and family and there is nothing wrong with that. We can empower women to make the best decisions for their careers and personal lives by providing information about how their earning potential and work schedules will be affected by the different decisions they make.

MISPERCEPTION: Women earn less than men (i.e. the gender pay gap) because of widespread pay discrimination.

FACT: The disparity between men's and women's wages is mostly the result of occupation, experience, hours, and so forth. There are always going to be some bad bosses out there, but widespread discrimination is unlikely the reason for the remaining wage gap:

- Women and men often choose to take on different roles in the family and that impacts how many hours they work, as well as the industries and careers they pursue.
 - There's almost no pay gap for single childless women, but the wage gap begins to widen around age 25, likely due to choices about family roles. **(Source: BLS)**
 - Fewer mothers than fathers say they would rather work full time than part time. **(Source: Pew)**
- Many women work in lower-paying professions. These careers provide the flexibility they desire.
 - The most common jobs for women generally pay less than the most common jobs for men. **(Source: Dept. of Labor)**
- Women work fewer hours than men.
 - Full-time men work 8.3 hours per day on average compared to 7.7 hours for women. **(Source: BLS)**
 - 85 percent of men work full time compared just 70 percent of women. **(Source: BLS)**
- Women and men often pursue different choices in education and training. Women may be drawn to majors and degrees that they find more interesting or personally fulfilling.
 - Men are concentrated in college majors leading to high-paying jobs, such as in technology and engineering, while women are concentrated in majors leading to lower-paying roles in social sciences and liberal arts. **(Source: Glassdoor)**
 - "The most male-dominated majors are Mechanical Engineering (89 percent male), Civil Engineering (83 percent male), Physics (81 percent male), Computer Science and Engineering (74 percent male), and Electrical Engineering (74 percent male)." **(Source: Glassdoor)**
 - "The most female-dominated majors are Social Work (85 percent female), Healthcare Administration (84 percent female), Anthropology (80 percent female), Nursing (80 percent

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female), and Human Resources (80 percent female).” (Source: [Glassdoor](#))

- “Nine of the 10 highest paying majors we examined are male-dominated. By contrast, 6 of the 10 lowest-paying majors are female-dominated.” (Source: [Glassdoor](#))
- Women consider non-financial issues like enjoyment of future work when choosing a major, while men are

more concerned with salaries and status. (Source: [Stanford](#))

- Men work in the most dangerous jobs and those jobs generally pay higher wages. (Source: [BLS](#))

These choices aren’t bad, but they often result in lower earnings. In fact, when controlling for decisions men and women make, the pay gap shrinks to 2 cents. (Source: [PayScale](#))

MISPERCEPTION: The gender pay gap between black and Hispanic women and white men is even wider than the overall pay gap because of racial discrimination in pay and opportunities.

FACT: Men and women of all races make many different choices based on what’s best for them as individuals and as families, all of which can affect pay. For example, [black and Hispanic women](#) are more likely to work in lower-paying service occupations like food service, domestic

work, and health care assistance. Although critical, these are not high-paying positions. There may also be systemic barriers to economic opportunity for particular groups that need to be addressed (for example, access to education), but this is not pay discrimination.

MISPERCEPTION: Legislation outlawing wage discrimination in the U.S. is needed and would close pay gaps.

FACT: Wage discrimination is already illegal in the U.S. and has been since 1963 when the Equal Pay Act was signed into law. The 1964 Civil Rights Act also protects women from harassment and baseless

gender discrimination in the workplace.

The Paycheck Fairness Act would change the legal system to encourage more lawsuits and increase government

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oversight over businesses compensation decisions. If enacted, it would make paychecks less fair for everyone by requiring that all workers to be paid the same, regardless of performance.

It would also threaten workers' existing flexible work arrangements because businesses will be more likely to adopt more rigid, one-size-fits-all practices to protect themselves from litigation. This would be especially bad for the many

women who are often willing to trade additional salary for a more customized work environment (e.g., telework, predictable scheduling) that suits their individual and family needs.

Under the Paycheck Fairness Act, businesses would be forced to put more resources toward expanded liability insurance, leaving both women and men with less money in their paychecks and fewer job opportunities.

MISPERCEPTION: Equal salaries are the best way to gauge women's and men's success.

FACT: We shouldn't ignore the reality that the majority of women value flexibility and enjoyment of their job over salary. That's why equal salaries really aren't the best way to measure women's and men's success. A better measure of success is whether women and men are free to pursue happiness on their own terms. This may result in unequal outcomes, but those outcomes are broadly the result of choices people make, not discrimination. The goal shouldn't be to get rid of the wage gap, but to make sure that women (and men) are offered with equal and plentiful opportunities in the workplace and in our economy.

WE ALL WANT WOMEN (AND MEN) TO BE TREATED FAIRLY IN THE WORKPLACE.
Take this quiz and find out what you know about the pay equity debate.

1 Is it true that women are paid less than men? If so, how much is the wage gap?

- A.** Yes, on average women earns \$.83 for every \$1 a man earns.
- B.** Yes, on average women earns \$.50 for every \$1 a man earns.
- C.** Yes, but I don't how much less women earn than men.
- D.** No, women and men earn the same on average.
- E.** No, women earn more than men on average.

2 Do working fathers and mothers both prioritize workplace flexibility and high pay equally when assessing jobs?

- A.** Yes, mothers and fathers care equally about these factors.
- B.** No, mothers care more about flexibility and fathers care more about high pay.
- C.** No, fathers care more about flexibility and mothers care more about high pay.
- D.** No, only mothers care about both high pay and flexibility.

3 If you were to adjust the wage gap for all of the different variables that determine one's salary like education level, experience, and time worked, what is the difference between men's and women's earnings?

- A.** 2 cents
- B.** 9 cents
- C.** 16 cents
- D.** 23 cents

4 What do you think single, childless women living in cities make for every dollar earned by single, childless men?

- A.** 77 cents
- B.** 88 cents
- C.** One dollar and 8 cents
- D.** 90 cents

5 What percentage of deaths that occur on the job are of male workers?

- A.** 92 percent
- B.** 75 percent
- C.** 50 percent
- D.** 33 percent

6 How can women help reduce the wage gap?

- A.** Negotiate their starting salaries
- B.** Be proactive in asking for raises
- C.** Consider their earning potential when deciding what to study at school and what jobs and careers to pursue
- D.** All of the above

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Quiz Answers

Q1 ANSWER: A.

The pay gap statistic comes from the Department of Labor. It compares the median wages of a full-time working man with a full-time working woman, and it shows that on average women earn less than men do. According to the **most recent data**, the average woman earned 83 percent of the average man's earnings. This statistic does not however, take in to account the number of hours worked, the profession, job responsibilities, years of experience or educational background of the workers. When controlling for these choices, the pay gap shrinks to a few cents.

Q4 ANSWER: C.

A 2010 study of single, childless urban workers between the ages of 22 and 30 (by the research firm Reach Advisors) found that women earned an average of 8 percent more than their male counterparts. Similarly, economist June O'Neill found that when comparing "single childless women to single childless men, ages 35-43, the wage gap not only disappears, but instead becomes a wage premium" (meaning women again out-earned their male counterparts).

Q2 ANSWER: B.

In a **Pew Social Trends report**, when it comes to what mothers and father value most in a job, working fathers place more importance on having a high-paying job, while working mothers are more concerned with having a flexible schedule.

Q5 ANSWER: A.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 92 percent of all workers who died on the job in 2019 were men. Outside of the military, jobs that carry that kind of risk both tend to be paid a higher premium, and chosen more often by men. These are jobs like mining, construction, utility work, and transportation.

Q3 ANSWER: A.

After controlling for factors such as work experience, career choice, time out of the workforce and school, just a two percent gap remains. Even the liberal American Association of University Women found that when the choice of major, hours worked, and career choices were taken into account, the wage gap shrinks to 7 percent.

Q6 ANSWER: D.

Some research suggests that women are less likely to negotiate salary offers and ask for raises, which may depress their earnings. That's important and empowering information to have: Women can learn to ask for raises, and we can teach our daughters to be comfortable talking about money. Young women should also understand how the degrees and majors they pursue will impact future earnings. A research report conducted by Glassdoor in 2017 found that female students choose college majors in fields that are low paying, while men favor majors that lead to more high paying jobs. This may be a reason why women end up earning less than men.

The Pay Equity Debate in 60 Seconds

WHAT'S AT STAKE

We all want women (and men) to be treated fairly in the workplace, but **the Paycheck Fairness Act would not be good for paychecks or fairness.** This bill would:

- NOT outlaw sex-based wage discrimination, which has been illegal since 1963.
- NOT boost women's paychecks, but those of trial lawyers by:
 - Allowing unlimited damages against employers.
 - Requiring workers to opt out of (rather than into) any class action lawsuit.
 - Putting the burden of proof on employers to justify any pay disparity.

This increased legal exposure would:

- Threaten workers' existing flexible work arrangements. Businesses will be more likely to adopt more rigid, one-size-fits-all practices to protect themselves.
- Discourage the hiring and advancement of women, who would be viewed as a legal risk.

The PFA also takes aim at "pay secrecy" policies in the workplace that ban employees from discussing pay. This will be ineffective because pay secrecy policies are **already illegal**, and most pay disparities are not the result of discrimination. Therefore,

greater transparency is not likely to close the wage gap.

The raw wage gap is not a measure of "equal pay for equal work" or a sign of widespread discrimination against women.

The wage gap is largely driven by different career choices NOT discrimination.

Compared to men, on average, women:

- Work fewer hours, in safer conditions, with greater flexibility.
- Study/train for and work in lower-paying professions.
- Take longer leaves of absence from the workplace due to childbearing and rearing.

When controlling for decisions men and women make about work, the pay gap shrinks to **2 cents**.

This isn't to say that sexism or bad bosses don't exist, but discrimination is already illegal under the Equal Pay Act (1963) and the Civil Rights Act (1964).

We all want fairness in the workplace, but as the Washington Post editorial board wrote in 2009, the PFA "invites too much intrusion and interference in core business decisions... Discrimination is abhorrent, but the Paycheck Fairness Act is not the right fix."

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ADDRESSING CONCERNS

CONCERNS	RESPONSES
<p>Women earn less than men because of widespread pay discrimination.</p>	<p>The oft-cited statistic from the Department of Labor that women earn 83 cents for each dollar men earn does not take into account profession, hours, work conditions, benefits, qualifications, experience or talent. The wage gap is driven by the different choices that women and men make to maximize earnings, flexibility, or fulfillment. On average, women work fewer hours and in lower-paying professions than men. These choices aren't bad, but they often result in lower earnings.</p>
<p>We need to outlaw wage discrimination in the U.S.</p>	<p>Wage discrimination is already illegal in the U.S. and has been since 1963 when the Equal Pay Act was signed into law. The 1964 Civil Rights Act also protects women from harassment and baseless gender discrimination in the workplace. The Paycheck Fairness Act would change the legal system to encourage more lawsuits and increase government oversight over businesses compensation decisions.</p>
<p>The gender pay gap between black and Hispanic women and white men is even wider than the overall pay gap because of racial discrimination in pay.</p>	<p>Men and women of all races make many different choices based on what's best for them as individuals and as families, all of which can affect pay. For example, black women are more likely to work in lower-paying service occupations like food service, domestic work, and health care assistance. Although critical, these are not high-paying positions. There may also be systemic barriers to economic opportunity for particular groups that need to be addressed (for example, access to education), but this is not pay discrimination.</p>

Top Takeaways: What Drives the Pay Gap?

Women's average weekly earnings in full-time jobs are about 83 percent of those for men according to the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This raw wage gap may be misinterpreted to suggest widespread wage discrimination against women, but the data do not support that claim. **The wage gap is largely driven by the choices that women and men make.**



WOMEN AND MEN TAKE ON DIFFERENT ROLES IN THEIR FAMILIES.

- There's almost no pay gap for single childless women, but the wage gap begins to widen around age 25, likely due to choices about family roles.
- **Fewer mothers than fathers** say they would rather work full time than part time.



WOMEN WORK FEWER HOURS THAN MEN.

- Full-time men work 8.3 hours per day on average compared to **7.7 hours** for women.
- **Eighty-five percent** of men work full time compared just 70 percent of women.
- When we control for hours alone, the pay gap shrinks to **11 percent**.



WOMEN AND MEN MAKE DIFFERENT CHOICES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

- Men are concentrated in **college majors** leading to high-paying jobs, such as in technology and engineering, while women are concentrated in majors leading to lower-paying roles in social sciences and liberal arts.
- Women consider **non-financial** issues like enjoyment of future work when choosing a major, while men are more concerned with salaries and status.



WOMEN MORE OFTEN WORK IN LOWER-PAYING PROFESSIONS.

- The **most common jobs** for women generally pay less than the most common jobs for men.



MEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO WORK IN DANGEROUS WORK CONDITIONS.

- Overwhelmingly, men work in the **most dangerous jobs** and those jobs generally pay higher wages.

The wage gap is not a measure of “equal pay for equal work” or a sign of widespread discrimination against women. In fact, wage discrimination is illegal in the U.S. The gap largely reflects individual choices about work.



Equal Pay Day: Social Media Kit

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Speak up! Post the below messages, videos, and graphics to social media and make your voice heard.

Hashtags to include: #EqualPayDay #EqualPay

Tag us so we can RT/Share your post:

- @IWF (Twitter)
- @IndependentWomensForum (Facebook)
- @IndependentWomensForum (Instagram)

GRAPHICS

Download these graphics to include with ANY Twitter, Facebook or Instagram posts.

What Drives the Pay Gap?

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WOMEN AND MEN TAKE ON DIFFERENT ROLES IN THEIR FAMILIES.

- There's almost no pay gap for single childless women, but the wage gap begins to widen around age 25. Heavily due to choices about family roles.
- Fewer mothers than fathers say they would rather work full time than part time.

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Two Truths and a Lie: Paycheck Fairness Act

Which of the following is NOT true?

A The PFA would outlaw sex-based wage discrimination.

B Currently, the wage gap between women and men is 80 cents on the dollar.

C The PFA would increase costly lawsuits against employers and make workplaces less flexible.

A: LIE!
The Paycheck Fairness Act doesn't actually outlaw discrimination. Sex-based wage discrimination is already illegal. Both the Equal Pay Act (1963) and the Civil Rights Act (1964) protect women's right to earn equal pay for equal work.

B: TRUTH!
It is true that the wage gap is about 80 cents on the dollar. However, this statistic is widely misused. The wage gap isn't a measure of equal pay for equal work. It is a comparison of averages, without any regard for profession, education, experience, hours, or working conditions. Men tend to do work in professions that pay more, and they work longer hours and in more dangerous working conditions (on average) than women.

C: TRUTH!
The Paycheck Fairness Act wouldn't help women's paychecks, but it would boost the paychecks of trial lawyers. The PFA would invert our justice system by requiring employers to essentially prove their innocence with regard to pay discrimination. It would un-limit the damages for employers with pay disparities and would empower the government to more closely track pay data. It would also require employees to opt out of (rather than into) class action suits against employers.

Of course we all want women to have adequate protections in the workplace. But the incorrectly-named Paycheck Fairness Act would not be fair. It would ultimately go too far and end up hurting the very women it is intended to help.

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Five Key Points about the Wage Gap

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The raw wage gap is not a measure of "equal pay for equal work" or a sign of widespread discrimination against women. The oft-cited statistic from the Department of Labor that women earn 83 cents on the dollar that men make does not compare women and men in the same profession who work the same hours, with the same qualifications, experience and talent.
- 2 OVERALL, MEN AND WOMEN MAKE DIFFERENCE CHOICES.**
The wage gap is driven by the different choices that women and men make. On average, women work fewer hours and in lower-paying professions than men. Women also tend to work in safer and more flexible conditions, and take longer leaves of absence from the workplace due to childbearing and rearing.
- 3 WAGE DISCRIMINATION IS ALREADY ILLEGAL IN THE U.S.**
Wage discrimination is already illegal in the U.S. and has been since 1963 when the Equal Pay Act was signed into law. The 1964 Civil Rights Act also protects women from harassment and baseless gender discrimination in the workplace. This isn't to say that sexism or bad bosses don't exist, but discrimination is already illegal.
- 4 THE PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT WON'T CLOSE THE WAGE GAP.**
The Paycheck Fairness Act would change the legal system to encourage more lawsuits and increase government oversight over businesses compensation decisions.
- 5 KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.**
Men and women have different priorities when it comes to work and family and there is nothing wrong with that. We can empower women to make the best decisions for their careers and personal lives by providing information about how their earning potential and work schedules will be affected by the different decisions they make.

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The Wage Gap Largely Reflects Individual Choices

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- Overwhelmingly, men work in the most dangerous jobs and those jobs generally pay higher wages.

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Know Your Rights

WAGE DISCRIMINATION IS ALREADY ILLEGAL IN THE U.S.



- Wage discrimination is already illegal in the U.S. and has been since 1963 when the **Equal Pay Act** was signed into law. The **1964 Civil Rights Act** also protects women from harassment and baseless gender discrimination in the workplace. This isn't to say that sexism or bad bosses don't exist, but discrimination is already illegal.

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Did You Know

CAREER CHOICES DRIVE THE WAGE GAP

We can **EMPOWER WOMEN** to make the best decisions for their careers and personal lives by providing information about how their earning potential and work schedules will be affected by the different decisions they make.



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continued >>

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

- The raw #WageGap is often misinterpreted to suggest widespread wage discrimination against women. FACT: Wage discrimination is illegal in the U.S. and has been since 1963 when the #EqualPayAct was signed into law. #EqualPayDay #EqualPay <http://bit.ly/2qa7Fiu>
- FACT: Pay discrimination is illegal in the U.S. thanks to the #EqualPayAct of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. #WageGap #EqualPay #EqualPayDay <http://bit.ly/2qa7Fiu>
- #EqualPayDay is a misleading holiday that's based on a misleading interpretation of wage data. The #WageGap is a comparison of averages that doesn't take into account variables like profession, education, experience, benefits, work conditions or hours. #EqualPay https://youtu.be/z1Qd_Zlh2W4
- The #WageGap is not a measure of “equal pay for equal work.” Instead, it's largely a reflection of individual choices about work. #EqualPayDay #EqualPay https://youtu.be/z1Qd_Zlh2W4
- The raw #WageGap is mostly driven by factors like occupation, experience, hours, etc., NOT discrimination. #EqualPayDay #EqualPay <http://bit.ly/2qa7Fiu>
- The #WageGap is largely driven by career choices.
 - Women work fewer hours than men.
 - Women more often work in lower-paying professions.
 - Women and men make different choices in education and training.#EqualPayDay #EqualPay <http://bit.ly/2qa7Fiu>
- Everyone believes in #EqualPayForEqualWork, but the #WageGap doesn't compare men and women with the same jobs, experience, training, or hours. #EqualPayDay #EqualPay https://youtu.be/z1Qd_Zlh2W4
- Every family is different, but the #WageGap is largely driven by the different roles women and men serve in their families. Nothing is wrong with these choices! #EqualPayDay #EqualPay <http://bit.ly/2qa7Fiu>

- Women do a ton of unpaid work, like caring for our homes and children. But, when it comes to paid work, we clock fewer hours on average, contributing to the #WageGap. #EqualPayDay #EqualPay <http://bit.ly/2qa7Fiu>
- On #EqualPayDay, it's important not to mislead women and girls. The #WageGap is a measure of outcomes, not opportunity, and certainly not discrimination. Our choices about work are in our own hands. #EqualPay <http://bit.ly/2qa7Fiu>

OTHER RESOURCES TO SHARE

BLOGS/OPEDS:

- [Equal Pay Day's lies: Insulting logic, a misleading statistic](#)
- [Every day is Equal Pay Day](#)
- [Why Didn't President Obama Close The Wage Gap?](#)
- [Questioning The Equal Pay Day Narrative](#)
- [The COVID-19 Crisis Reminds Us Why 'Equal Pay Day' Is Irrelevant](#)

FACT SHEET

- [Takeaways: What Drives the Wage Gap?](#)

VIDEOS:

- [Equal Pay Day is not an accurate picture of how America works](#)