



THE NOT SO SIMPLE TRUTH

About the Gender Pay Gap
2026 Update



There isn't one pay gap, there are many.

Pay gaps vary by race and ethnicity, education, disability, LGBTQ+ status, caregiving, and by where women live and work.

Progress isn't automatic. Closing pay gaps requires sustained action at the federal, state, and employer levels.

81¢

Women's earnings for every \$1 men earn (full-time workers).

76¢

Not everyone works full-time: including part-time work, women earn 76¢ per \$1 men earn.

\$542,800

The amount of money women working full-time lose due to the pay gap over a 40-year career.

Unequal Pay, Unequal Impact

\$1
White,
non-Hispanic
Man



58¢

Native
women

67¢

Native Hawaiian
and Pacific
Islander women

58¢

Hispanic
women

65¢

Black
women

77¢

White, non-
Hispanic
women

96¢

Asian
women

Why the Gap Won't Close on Its Own

- **Job segregation:** Women are steered into undervalued jobs and paid less for them.
- **Caregiving penalty:** Caregivers—especially mothers—lose pay, hours, and opportunities.
- **Pay-setting practices:** Pay secrecy and closed-door decisions keep disparities hidden.
- **Discrimination:** Bias still shapes who gets hired, promoted, and paid fairly.

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Build Power. Take Action.

AAUW gives you tools to negotiate, plan, and keep more of what you earn: Start Smart, Work Smart, and Money Smart. And we don't stop at awareness — we organize and advocate for policy changes that close pay gaps and expand opportunity for women.



Unequal Pay, District by District

Even within the same state, the pay gap isn't the same everywhere. The table below shows how much women earn for every \$1 men earn in each U.S. congressional district in South Dakota, including part-time work and full-time, year-round workers.

South Dakota	All Workers Earnings Ratio	Full-Time Workers Earnings Ratio
At large	78.7%	82.8%

Note: "All workers" includes part-time and seasonal work; "full-time" reflects year-round full-time workers—both shown as women's earnings per \$1 men earn. Source: AAUW analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.

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